



T H E

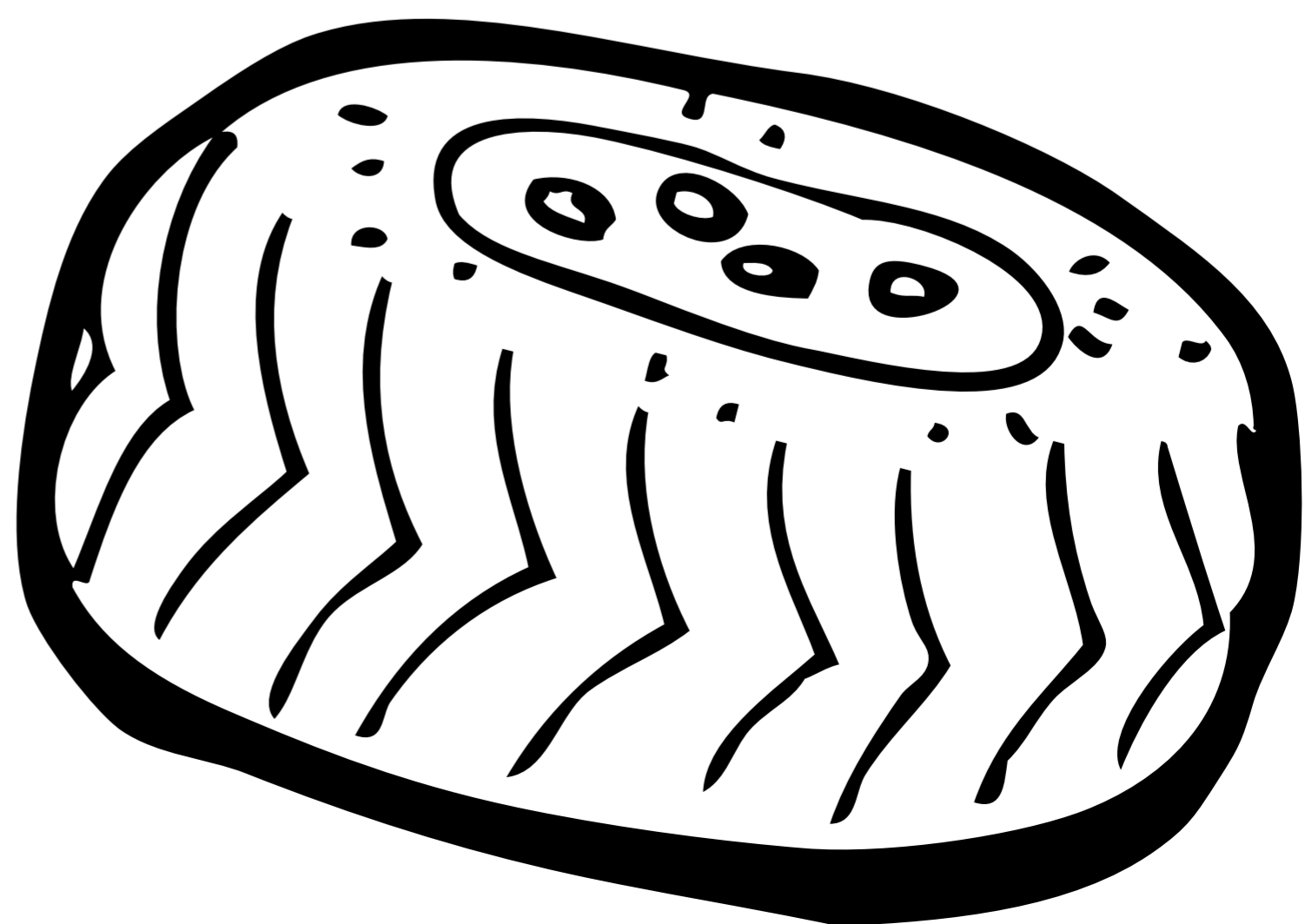
T I R E

B U Y I N G

BILL DEBOER

AUTHOR

You could drive the priciest performance car out there, but if its tires are substandard, your ride will be substandard too — not to mention potentially dangerous. Most people don't think much about their tires until a dashboard light indicates they're low on air, they discover one is flat or they're riding along and have a blowout. The best way to protect against this last worst case scenario is routinely inspecting your tires for wear and damage.



Tire Milestones to Keep in Mind

The lifespan of your tires depends on their quality, your driving habits, the climate and the road conditions they're subjected to. Here are some general rules of thumb, though:

- Have your tires professionally rotated and balanced on a regular basis and check air pressure once a week to ensure they're properly inflated.
- Visually evaluate tread wear every month or so. When in doubt, have a pro check it out.
- When your tires reach five years old, they should be professionally inspected each year.
- If your tires (spare tires included) reach 10 years old, replace them despite their visual condition. Your safety is worth far more than the cost of a new set of tires.

How to Evaluate Tire Tread



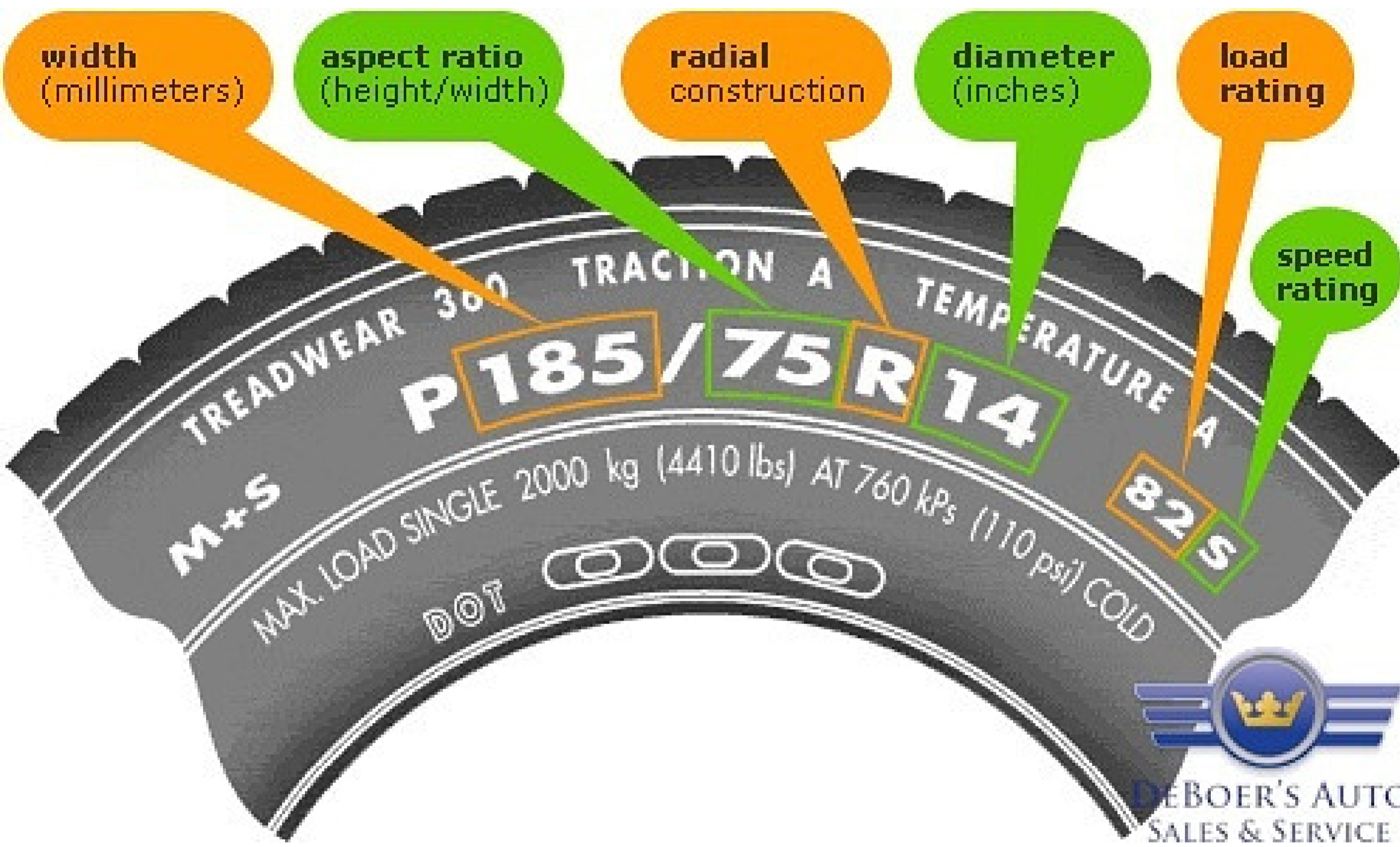
Unless you are an automotive professional, visually inspecting your tire tread may leave you questioning if it's sufficient. One quick and easy way to evaluate your tread is to use a graduated tread depth gauge. These inexpensive tools are available at most auto parts stores. Simply place the probe into a groove in your tire, press the edges of the probe flat against the tire, and read the measurement. If tread measures less than $4/32''$, it's time to replace the tires. For best traction in snow, replace at $6/32$.

Signs That It's Time to Replace Your Tires



When you're driving in slick road conditions, does your vehicle tend to hydroplane or skid more than it used to? Have you been in an accident or a close call that required you to suddenly slam on your brakes? Has it been awhile since you've replaced your tires and your car has been parked outside where it was subjected to an unusually hot summer or cold winter? Have you noticed it's more difficult to handle your vehicle when you're driving in snowy or wet conditions?

How to Locate The Tire Information



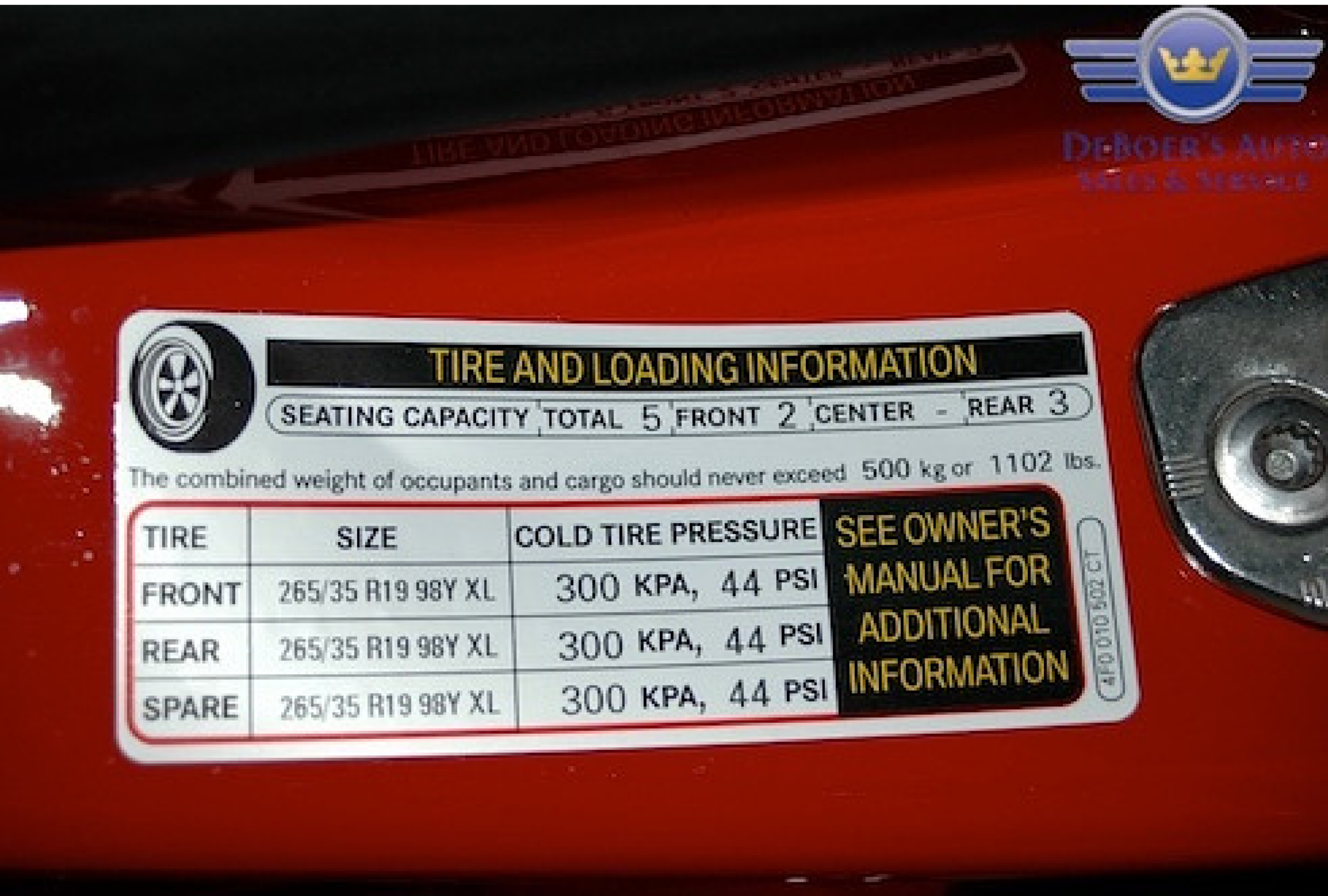
If you're unsure how to locate the vehicle tire information you need or where to find your car's tire size, look at your tire's sidewall. For illustrative purposes, assume it says P185/75R 14 82S.

Here's what that means.

DECIPHERING YOUR TIRE CODE

- **Type of Tire.** "P" means the tire is designed for "passenger" vehicles. Other notations you might see are light truck (LT), temporary spare (T) or ST (special trailer). If you don't see any of these letters, the tire is a European metric size. These are equivalent to P tires, but may have different inflation or load capacity recommendations.
- **Width.** The first three numbers you'll see is the width in millimeters from sidewall to sidewall.
- **Aspect Ratio.** The next two numbers (75) show the tire's ratio of height to width. Lower numbers (55 and below) signify a shorter sidewall (which provides better handling).
- **Construction.** "R" stands for radial.
- **Rim Diameter.** The next two numbers (14) are your rim's diameter in inches.
- **Load.** The next two numbers (82 in this example) are important: they show how much weight a tire is designed to support. The number you see isn't the weight. It's a number you'll need to look up on a Tire Load Carrying Capacity chart. For example, the chart shows 95 can hold up to 1,521 pounds. This number is per tire so multiply by four to get maximum capacity.
- **Speed.** The final letter denotes the max speed a tire can run at. H equates to 112 mph.

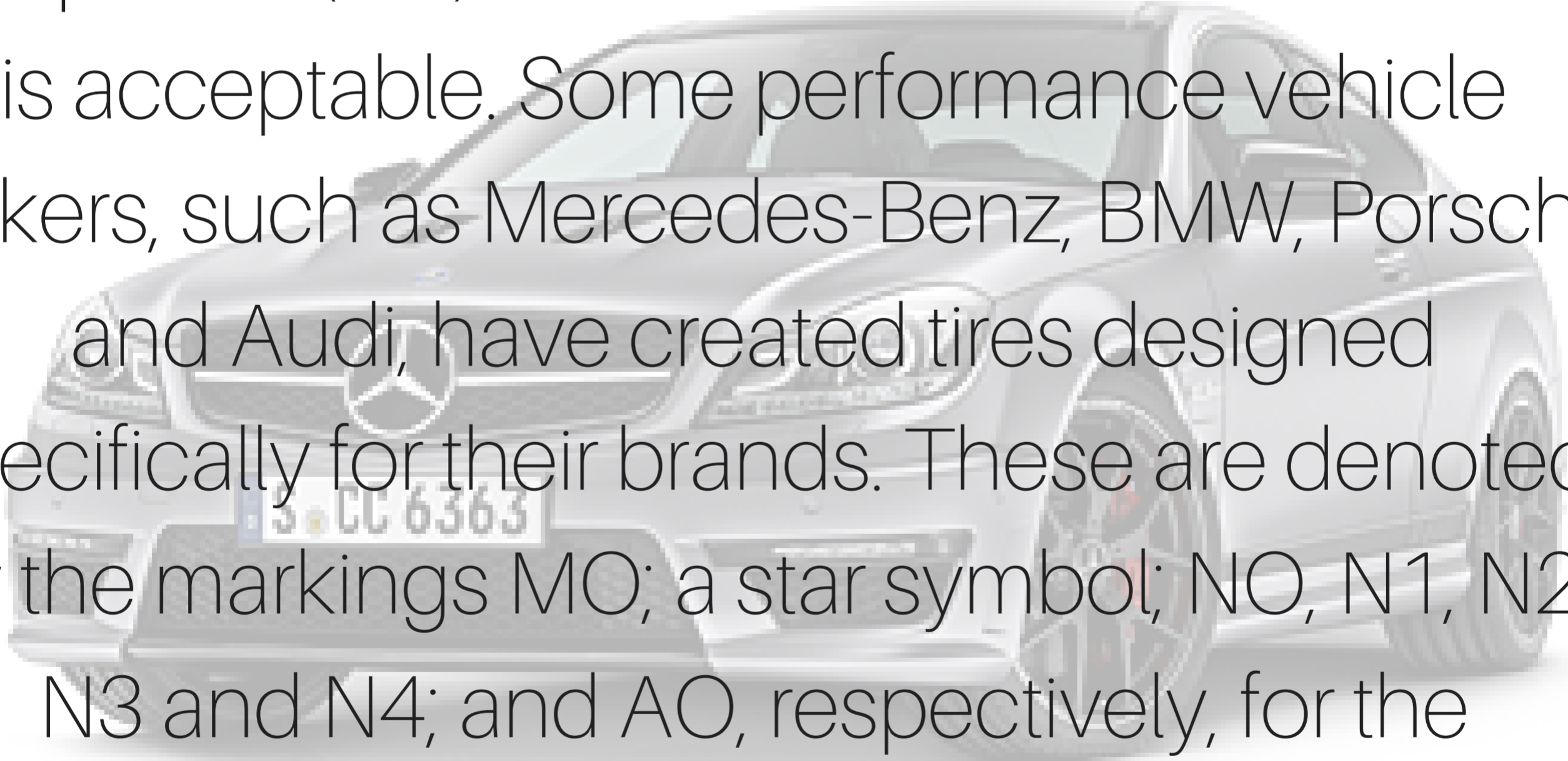
CHECK INSIDE YOUR CAR'S DOOR



Besides your tires' sidewalls, you'll find helpful information about your tires on a sticker inside your driver's side door. Usually, you'll find your car's maximum cargo weight, tire size and ideal tire air pressure listed.

OTHER FACTORS TO CONSIDER WHEN PURCHASING NEW TIRES

Besides knowing which size tires you'll need, you also need to decide whether to buy original equipment (OE) tires or if an aftermarket version is acceptable. Some performance vehicle makers, such as Mercedes-Benz, BMW, Porsche and Audi, have created tires designed specifically for their brands. These are denoted by the markings MO; a star symbol; NO, N1, N2, N3 and N4; and AO, respectively, for the aforementioned brands. For the best performance, it's wise to spend a bit more for these specialty OE tires.



HOW TO SELECT THE RIGHT TIRE FOR YOUR DRIVING NEEDS



Since choosing the right tire improves the ride and handling of your car, it's in your best interest to select wisely. Before you tire shop, you'll need to know the basic tire specifications for your vehicle, such as tire type, size, speed rating and load capacity, for example. (Consult our blog posts, "How to Tire Shop - Steps 1 and 2" for specifics.) Beyond these basics, know which of the following tires best suit your driving habits.

Car and SUV Tires



- Passenger: Providing longer wear and equating to a lower cost per mile over time, these value tires are a smart option across the board.
- Highway: These tires are designed with a special rib that yields a quiet ride, while increasing tread life.
- Touring: These hybrids blend outstanding ride quality with improved performance over all-purpose tires.
- High-performance: These tires provide heightened stability and handling at high speeds.
- Symmetrical: These tires' tread patterns are identical on both the inner and outer part of the tire. This is the most common design for vehicle tires because it's the longest-lasting.
- Asymmetrical: The inner and outer tread patterns on these tires are different. This difference yields better performance and are commonly used on high-end sports cars.
- All-season: The default tires on most cars, these models are a dependable choice in moderate climates not prone to extreme winter conditions.

Truck Tires



- All Terrain: Probably the most popular truck tire, these tires provide greater off-road traction with a slight trade-off in highway comfort.
- Mud Terrain: These are the highest-traction tires that are still highway-driving approved.
- Light Truck: These tires provide better grip and outstanding handling in all weather conditions, yet are heavier-duty than passenger tires so they can handle off-road conditions effectively.

WHAT TO KNOW IF YOU LIVE IN A COLD CLIMATE



One of the most puzzling predicaments many tire shoppers face is whether they need snow or winter tires. Contrary to popular belief, there is a difference between snow tires and winter tires.

That difference has to do with traction. Winter tires feature a knobby exterior tread designed to power through slushy mud and snow. Snow tires (you'll see a snowflake symbol on a tire's sidewall) have been certified by the American Society for

Testing and Materials to achieve superior scores on traction tests. (Snow tires' traction scores are 110-plus as compared to 100 scores for all-purpose tires.) This extra traction is especially beneficial when driving in severe winter weather characterized by slick, packed snow. Do you need snow tires or winter tires?

That depends on how much snow falls in your area and how long it stays on the ground. It is all determined by how cold it gets where you live.

THE BEST TIRES COME WITH A WARRANTY

If you're located in Sussex County and will be buying new tires soon, contact us at DeBoer's Auto. We'll help you select the ideal tires for your car and driving habits, and sell them to you at the lowest available price. We also have Road Hazard Protection available.

WHAT DO ROAD HAZARD WARRANTIES COVER?

Unlike defect and tread-life warranties (manufacturer's warranties typically built into the price of tires), most tire stores offer road hazard warranties at a cost per tire that usually ranges from around \$10 to \$20 or more. Though these warranties aren't prohibitively expensive, no one wants to spend any amount of money on something they will not need or use. Road hazard warranties don't cover normal wear and tear. They cover you in the event your tires are damaged or punctured while driving over road debris. Many also cover the expense of roadside assistance (a tire change or tow) if you experience a flat tire

CONSIDER YOUR DRIVING HABITS



If you live in an area where extensive construction is occurring, your risks of a tire puncture may be greater and road hazard insurance might be wise. If you like the security of knowing you're covered should the unlikely occur, road hazard coverage may be a good idea. Similarly, if you often drive long distances, a warranty may provide peace of mind, if it covers towing and roadside repair. Otherwise, you'll need to weigh the likelihood you'll experience a flat versus the cost of the policy and what you get for that money.

BEFORE YOU BUY, READ THE FINE PRINT



- “If my tires are damaged to the extent they need to be replaced, will the warranty cover that?” Usually, you’ll learn the road hazard warranty only covers tires that can be repaired - not replaced. Before you buy, know exactly what the warranty does and does not cover.
- “If my tire is punctured by a nail, can I be certain the warranty absolutely will cover the cost to repair it?” You’ll probably learn that improper car maintenance can void a warranty.
- “Do I have to return to the place the warranty was purchased to receive warranty covered repair?” If the answer is, “no,” follow up by asking, “Do I have to return the damaged tire to the place of purchase to be reimbursed?”
- “Are the terms of the warranty based on a cut-and-dry timeframe or some other factor?” The best warranties specify they’ll repair or replace a tire for free for the first year and at a pro-rated cost for year two, for instance. Less desirable plans pay out (or don’t pay out) based on tread wear.

Meet The Author



Bill began his career in the family business in 1997, when he joined his father, Bill Sr. after graduating from Pennsylvania State University. Bill Jr. earned a B.S. in Business Management at PSU. Today, Bill is the co-owner and Vice President of DeBoers Auto. Bill is responsible for the daily operations of the family business including business development, sales, service, process improvement, human resources and the technician education programs