



McGee Company

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Safe Winter Driving – Winter Tires and Traction Devices

- 1) The majority of Tires are labelled M-S, or M/S will provide enhanced traction over a summer tire. This label was started over 40 years ago and indicated the tire offers a deep tread. It is not regulated by NHTSA under the Uniform Tire Quality Grading (UTQG) system.
- 2) In September 2009 NHTSA accepted the FMSS No.139 definition of a snow tire which must meet ASTM E-1136 and the snow tire must carry the Alpine Snowflake symbol. A snow tire has a soft rubber compound to improve traction on icy or snowy roads.
- 3) Safety on slick roads is about being able to stop quickly and to accelerate appropriately. Snow tires designed for winter conditions will improve stopping ability and acceleration by thirty to fifty percent over M/S or M-S tires.
- 4) All weather tires (M/S) and winter tires perform better with 3/16" tread than with 1/8" tread on snow or ice. Generally, it is accepted that 1/8" is the minimum tread depth for adequate traction on dry roads. Two of the largest tire dealers in the U.S., Les Schwab Tire and Discount Tire recommend a minimum of 3/16" tread depth on wet and snow packed roads. Tire Rack recommends 5/32nds minimum tread for wet roads. Even at 3/16" tread depth the traction on ice and snow is significantly less than a tire that is slightly worn. In most cases when tires get to a lower tread depth the wear is uneven, creating more of a traction problem. California and Nevada require winters tires on mountain passes with a minimum of 3/16" of tread.
<https://www.lesschwab.com/article/how-to-choose-snow-tires.html>
<https://www.discounttire.com/learn/winter-driving-tips>
- 5) All vehicles need to carry tire chains or approved alternative traction devices like Autosock to traverse the mountain roads when sudden adverse winter conditions require additional traction. Oregon, Washington and California currently have this requirement for many mountain roads.