

SPRING 2020

# THE TRACKER

THE PUBLICATION FOR TIRE PROFESSIONALS  
FROM WESTERN CANADA TIRE DEALERS

## **2020 Vision** DRIVING INTO THE DECADE

### **PLUS**

Shymko: Celebrate retail • Geleta: Tackling the 20s • Spring Training  
Proper Storage • Social Media Matters • Peggy Fisher's view







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# THE TRACKER

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We hope you find this issue of The Tracker informative, educational and entertaining. We welcome your feedback and invite you to submit any ideas you have for upcoming issues. Feel free to drop us a line (or two)...

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## WCTD EXECUTIVE 2019

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## WCTD MEMBERSHIP APPLICATION

COMPANY NAME	
ADDRESS	
CITY	
PROV	POSTAL CODE
PHONE	FAX
EMAIL	
CATEGORY OF MEMBERSHIP (SEE BELOW)	
VOTING MEMBER a. Independent Tire Dealer b. Retreader	ASSOCIATE MEMBER, NON-VOTING 1. Jobber or Distributor 2. Manufacturer 3. Exporter or Mfg. Rep. 4. Dealer Support Services
MY BUSINESS IS MADE UP PRIMARILY OF THE SALE OF TIRES AND TIRE RELATED SERVICES	YES NO (CIRCLE ONE)
AUTHORIZED BY (PLEASE PRINT)	

Annual Dues \$120.00 incl. GST per calendar year, per location.

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Email: rayg@wctd.ca





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## THE DEMISE OF THE TRADITIONAL BRICKS AND MORTAR RETAIL MODEL.



### What does it mean to the independent tire dealer?



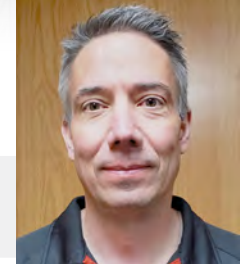
**It seems like every other day there's a news story about another retail store closing its doors. The scenario usually involves either complete insolvency or massive closures to try and salvage what's left of the company by eliminating poorly performing locations.**

In 2019 alone we saw big retail names like Payless, Gymboree, Forever 21, Gap, Pier 1, Lowes, H&M, Home Outfitters, Bentley Leathers and many, many more shutter stores across North America. In fact, in the United States last year there were more than 9,300 retail closures; a record setting year. The common theme that keeps being repeated in many instances is the growth and continued use of online purchasing. There really isn't too much that a person can't buy online anymore.



What does this mean to the independent tire dealer? Well, the U.S. online automotive eCommerce market passed \$12 billion (US\$) in 2019 and in Canada it reached a whopping C\$3.8 billion. The latest estimates are that approximately just over 20% of these dollar figures are comprised of tire purchases.

These are purchases being made electronically, which means that these consumers are not walking through your or my door to purchase their tires or automotive needs. Amazon has aggressively targeted the replacement tire market, as have the tire manufacturers. In many instances they are selling directly to the consumer, cutting out the tire dealer from the sales equation altogether.



Neal Shymko  
President, WCTD

Where does this trend leave the independent tire dealer? Are we destined to just become an installation provider, eventually all but completely removed from the tire purchasing equation? While that would be an extreme example of the possible future, there is no doubt that the landscape of the replacement tire market is changing—and changing quickly.

***The independent tire dealer should always have a place in the market due to the service aspect of our businesses.***

As independent tire dealers we certainly need to adapt and evolve to address these changing purchasing habits. Whether it be by aggressively pursuing the online tire market ourselves, teaming up with the tire manufacturers and the Amazons of the world to be installation centres for their online sales or some other possible answer, one thing is for sure: the dynamics of the retail tire market are changing and will effect our bottom lines.

The independent tire dealer should always have a place in the market due to the service aspect of our businesses. The big unknowns are: how much of the retail "pie" will be left to brick and mortar stores? And how can we maximize our relevance in this ever changing digitally driven world?

One thing for sure, the option for an independent dealer to simply stagnate and do nothing would end up being the worst move and leave that dealer on the outside looking in. The future of eCommerce is certainly now, and the tire industry is no longer exempt from its grasp.

You can be assured that WCTD is fully engaged in monitoring these developments. Your association offers a platform on which to exchange ideas and solutions as to how members may not only succeed in this environment but benefit collectively and continue to thrive.

Please feel free to reach out with your questions and suggestions.





# Tire and Wheel Service Solutions





## Tackling the '20s

**E**ntering a new decade, our independent tire dealer will be facing numerous challenges.

The way people buy tires is constantly changing—and dealers have to be able to adapt. On-line purchases (e-commerce) are now common and growing. Shoppers buy on-line for numerous reasons from variety of products or access to consumer reviews to pricing, on line ads, lack of availability at local dealers. In some instances the abundance of general information available on line might make the client feel they don't need the local dealer's specialized expertise to help them make a decision.

Then we have the 'ship to installer' programs that on-line dealers, distributors and even some manufacturers are implementing. Should we, as independent dealers, get signed up with these programs?

In addition, we still have the challenging issue of size proliferation. At the start of the millennium approximately 270 SKUs covered 80% of our passenger and light truck needs. Today we have approximately 630 SKUs to cover those same categories. Not only that but expect this to increase further with the onset of electric vehicles. Batteries add another ten to 20% weight to the vehicle, so EVs need tires that can support the added weight, as well as responding to other factors.

Establishing and maintaining a strong relationship with suppliers and distributors is essential going forward. Dealers really need to take inventory of their software solutions to make sure that they can keep up with these current trends and demands.

### Register now for upcoming WCTD / TIA Training

Please note the following dates and advise me of your attendees as soon as possible.

**Commercial Tire Service Training Level 400  
(Train the Trainer) – March 10, 11, 12 in Vernon, BC**

**Commercial Tire Service Training Level 400  
(Train the Trainer) – April 14, 15, 16 in Edmonton, AB**

**Earthmover Tire Service Training (Advanced Service  
Training – June 9, 20, 11 in Edmonton, AB**

### We need your input!

Your association depends very much on the input it receives from members like you. From time to time it's important that we survey our members for feedback. Please let us know what your thoughts are on the issues below—or if there are other matters of which we should be aware.

**2019 LUG NUT TORQUE CHARTS**  
Still have some on hand. Email: [rayg@wctd.ca](mailto:rayg@wctd.ca)



Ray Geleta  
Executive Director,  
WCTD

Please send your response to Ray Geleta at [rayg@wctd.ca](mailto:rayg@wctd.ca)

1. What are your thoughts on TPMS issues?
2. What do you think about manufacturers and distributors selling direct to the end users; and using your locations as installation points?
3. What do we need to do to get more participation from our members on social media?
4. What kind of training interests you and where should we hold these training sessions?
5. What additional programs and or benefits should your board be looking at bringing forward this year?

Your response on these questions is much appreciated.

**Wishing you a successful spring selling season.**

### NOTICE OF ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING WESTERN CANADA TIRE DEALERS

Notice is hereby given that the Annual General Meeting of Western Canada Tire Dealers will be held at 10 AM on Friday, March 20, 2020 at the Delta Grand Okanagan, 1310 Water Street, Kelowna, British Columbia.

A quorum shall consist of eligible voting members present or represented by proxy or, in the case of a corporate body, by its duly appointed representative.

Voting members may make submissions, but these must be in writing and forwarded to the association office, to be received by Friday, February 21, 2020 in order to be placed on the agenda. Printed agendas will be available at the meeting.

The WCTD Board of Directors request your attendance / participation and input to help them direct the business of the association.

# WCTD ANNOUNCES SPRING TRAINING 2020

In conjunction with **Tire Industry Association (TIA)**, Western Canada Tire Dealers announces the following training courses for 2020.

## Earthmover Tire Service (ETS) Advanced Installer Program

### Edmonton, AB

June 9<sup>th</sup> – 11<sup>th</sup>

Location: Holiday Inn and Suites, 11330-170 St., Edmonton

For room registration phone 780-444-3110. Starts 8 AM. Cost \$900.00

## Commercial Tire Service (CTS) Level 400 / Train the Trainer

### (1) Vernon, BC,

March 10<sup>th</sup> – 12<sup>th</sup>

Location: Prestige Inn, 4411 – 32 St., Vernon

For room registration phone 250-558-5991. Starts 8 AM. Cost \$900.00

### (2) Edmonton, AB,

April 14<sup>th</sup> – 16<sup>th</sup>

Location: Holiday Inn and Suites, 11330-170 St., Edmonton

For room registration phone 780-444-3110. Starts 8 AM. Cost \$900.00

The instructor for all of these courses is TIA Director of Service **Matt White**, who has been our instructor in the past. Matt is renowned worldwide for his training and is highly regarded as the best.



Matt White leads an EMT Program

**Attendees must bring their own PPE equipment** (steel toe shoes, gloves, hard hats, vests, glasses etc.) for the hands-on, practical portion of the training.

Training material, lunches and coffee breaks will be provided.

## Attendee information

Indicate course attending

Attendee

#1 \_\_\_\_\_  ETS  CTS(1)  CTS(2)

#2 \_\_\_\_\_  ETS  CTS(1)  CTS(2)

#3 \_\_\_\_\_  ETS  CTS(1)  CTS(2)

Company \_\_\_\_\_

Address \_\_\_\_\_

City \_\_\_\_\_ Province \_\_\_\_\_ Postal Code \_\_\_\_\_

Phone \_\_\_\_\_ email \_\_\_\_\_

Payment Method: Cheque \_\_\_\_\_ Visa \_\_\_\_\_ Master Card \_\_\_\_\_

Card # \_\_\_\_\_ Expiration Date \_\_\_\_ / \_\_\_\_

Card Holder Name \_\_\_\_\_

**Please remember to bring your own PPE for the hands-on portion of the training  
Registration must be accepted two weeks prior to course**

Registration can be e-mailed rayg@wctd.ca or post mailed to:

WCTD, 65 Woodbine Road, Sherwood Park, AB, T8A 4A7

**Questions or concerns? Please call Ray Geleta at 780-554-9259 or e-mail rayg@wctd.ca**



# KAL TIRE OPENS OTR TIRE RETREAD PLANT IN MEXICO

— TIRE BUSINESS STAFF



Courtesy of Kal Tire

**The new OTR retread plant — Kal Tire's first in Mexico and sixth worldwide — is the Canadian company's first to use a robot for skiving and tread grooving, improving access to custom tread designs to best suit each site's conditions.**

The new OTR retread plant — Kal Tire's first in Mexico and sixth worldwide — is the Canadian company's first to use a robot for skiving and tread grooving, improving access to custom tread designs to best suit each site's conditions.

CANANEA, Mexico — Kal Tire has opened an OTR tire retread plant in Cananea to supply a number of the open-pit copper mines located in northwest Mexico,

"Retreading is a service we've wanted to bring to Mexico for some time, because we know from experience with our other facilities that retreading extends tire life and reduces the cost of ownership," Pedro Pacheco, vice president operations, Latin America, Kal Tire's Mining Tire Group, said.

"Retreading also reduces the impact on the environment. Our clients see this as an opportunity and look forward to seeing our retread tires in operation."



Mining Tire Group

The new OTR retread plant — Kal Tire's first in Mexico and sixth worldwide — is the Canadian company's first to use a robot for skiving and tread grooving, improving access to custom tread designs to best suit each site's conditions.

The robot technology — designed and developed in collaboration with Marangoni Group's TRM – Tyre Retreading Machinery business — is a pilot program as Kal Tire begins automating retread operations around the world, helping to ensure team members don't have to perform the most strenuous steps.

"The robot will allow us to switch tread patterns without having to switch tools," Mr. Pacheco said. "The work is done efficiently and lets us make the most of the expertise of our people."

Marangoni Group's TRM business unit supplied the equipment for the new Kal Tire retread plant in Mexico.

Designed to process tire sizes up to 63 inches rim diameter, the 32,300-square-foot plant also includes an automated building machine with "exclusive" contact calender head as well as autoclaves and curing presses as well as the automated tooling head for buffing and grooving, TRM said.

The plant will employ 40 workers who have been in training for nearly a year to achieve their certification as retread technicians, Kal Tire said.

All plant team members are local residents of Cananea, a town of 30,000 located in the state of Sonora about 60 miles southeast of the U.S.-Mexico border town of Nogales, Mexico. It's located in close proximity to roughly 30% of Mexico's copper mines, Kal said.

Kal said the plant, commissioned Oct. 18, is designed to produce 80 tires per month initially, but capacity can be increased to meet demand.

Dan Allan, senior vice president, Kal Tire's Mining Tire Group, said Kal is "excited to bring this value-added service to this market to help customers keep tires in production. Retreading reduces a tire's operating cost per hour, it reduces new purchases and it reduces the impact on the environment."



Marangoni Group - TRM photo

**Marangoni Group's TRM business unit supplied the equipment for the new Kal Tire retread plant in Mexico.**

Kal has been active in Mexico for the past dozen years, he said.



The companies did not disclose information pertaining to the project's cost.

Kal Tire is Canada's largest independent tire dealer and one of North America's largest commercial tire dealers, according to TRM. The client's mining tire group, it added, services more than 150 mining sites worldwide.

Kal Tire's other earthmover tire retreading facilities are located in Vernon, British Columbia; Alfreton, England; Accra, Ghana; and La Negra, Chile.

Trento, Italy-based TRM manufactures machines and production lines for the retreading of passenger car, truck, OTR and aircraft tires.

# FEDERATED INSURANCE

## Advises on Proper Storage Methods for Tires



by Reza Kamrana  
Account Representative,  
Associations, Federated Insurance

**T**he methods you use to store tires play a vital role in ensuring your business is mitigating risks. If the storage space isn't set up correctly, or if your sprinkler system isn't adequate for the type of storage system you use, your business could suffer a tire fire. Improper tire storage could also lead to injuries.

**There are two main ways tires can be stored: solid pile or racking.**

### Solid pile

Solid piling is the vertical stacking of tires directly on the floor or on a pallet on the floor. Tires can reach a maximum height of 8 feet (2.4 m) for a hydraulic-scheduled sprinkler system and 5 feet (1.5 m) for a pipescheduled sprinkler system.

### Racking

Tires can also be stored on racks. In order to ensure the rack remains in good condition, it's important to have impact protection for fixed racks, especially at their ends. This will prevent lift trucks from running into the rack and damaging it. The height of stored tires on racks also needs to be monitored: there needs to be at least 36 inches (0.9 m) from the top of stored tires to sprinkler head deflectors or heat sources on the ceiling. Some businesses install chains or signs to hang above the racks to show the maximum storage height, so there's an easy visual guide to help judge the correct distance.

### Stacking

When storing tires either in racking or in a solid pile, there are three ways to stack them. Each type of stacking presents different types of fire hazards; when setting up or reviewing a sprinkler system for your property, this should be considered. Tires can be stacked horizontally, vertically, or they can be laced.

- **Horizontal:**

Tires are on their treads, side by side. This type of stacking is often used with racks, when there is limited storage directly on the floor, or



**Federated insures over 300 WCTD members in western Canada. They range from small rural independents to national brands and buying groups.**

when tires are stored in the lot. If there's a fire, horizontal stacking may restrict water from getting to the fire, as the water hits the tread and goes around the tire.

- **Vertical:**

Tires are on their sides and stacked vertically. Vertical stacking is usually used in solid piling or in seacans. If a fire was to break out, vertical stacking acts like a chimney, which means that water can flow down to the base of the fire. But it can be a challenge to get the water over the right spot, and paired with the extreme heat, this could cause the fire to grow very quickly.

- **Laced:**

Tires are woven together so they take up less space, but it's not easy to access a single tire. This method is often used for transportation of tires, for storing waste or scrap tires/recycled tires, and in new tire storage warehouses. This method is also sometimes used in open portable racking. More tires can be stored in a single open portable rack by lacing the tires than stacking them. The downside is that if there's a fire, laced tires are so tightly packed together that it can be difficult to get water to the source of the fire.

### Separation spacing

When storing tires, they need to be separated and spaced appropriately, according to NFPA 13. For solid piling, aisles are required to be at least 3.28 feet (1 m) wide. If the storage room area exceeds 1,076 square feet (100 m<sup>2</sup>) and the storage height is 19.69 feet (6 m) or less, there must be one main aisle with a minimum width of 7.87 feet (2.4 m). For storage heights greater than 19.69 feet (6 m), the aisle must be 11.81ft (3.6 m) wide.

### Pallets

Pallets are flat wooden or plastic structures that make the storage and transportation of products easier and more efficient. They can be used when tires are racked or stored in a solid pile. They can also be a source of fuel for a fire. Pallets are made of light wood, heavier wood, or plastic, and the open space between both the top and bottom section, as well as the slats, means they burn easily. Pallets can change the requirements





for sprinkler systems, depending on where they're used, how they're used, and how many there are. Plastic pallets can also increase the requirements for the sprinkler system. Storing empty pallets can present a risk, since they burn so easily. Because of this, pallets should be stored outside.

- **Outside storage:**

Pallets should not be placed up against the building, but rather at a safe distance of 50 feet (15 m) from the building and any other property. They should also be stored no higher than 10 feet (3 m), covering a maximum surface area of 10,000 square feet (929 m<sup>2</sup>).

- **Inside storage:**

If pallets must be stored inside, as few as possible should be kept. In a building lacking a sprinkler system, they should reach no higher than 4 feet (1.2 m) within an area not exceeding 1,000 square feet (100 m<sup>2</sup>).

In a building with a sprinkler system, they should go no higher than 6 feet (1.8 m), 8 feet (2.4 m), or 10 feet (3 m), depending on the sprinkler design, according to NFPA 1 Fire code chapter 4. All storage should maintain proper aisles between pallet stacks and be located away from other inventory. Pallets should also be stored away from any heat or fire sources. Ideally, a minimum number of empty pallets should be kept at the location and regular removal should be arranged when the maximum storage limit is reached.

### Inventory control

Inventory should be tracked, as a loss of products can be costly to your business. Improving your tracking process can reduce leakage costs and improve your bottom line. Using radio frequency identification (RFID) can improve inventory tracking and control, helping to inform you of the quantity and location of your inventory. There are a variety of external companies that offer RFID services.

### In Conclusion

Review these methods and determine what works best for your tire business. Choosing the right storage method will help keep your business safe, prevent employee injuries, and improve your bottom line.

**Storing empty pallets can present a risk, since they burn so easily. Because of this, pallets should be stored outside.**



Knowing your business matters.

#### A few words about us

We're Federated Insurance, a 100% Canadian-owned direct writing commercial insurance specialist that has been serving Canadian businesses of all sizes for over 90 years. That's nearly a century of building relationships based on trust and integrity. Visit us at [www.federated.ca](http://www.federated.ca) to learn more.



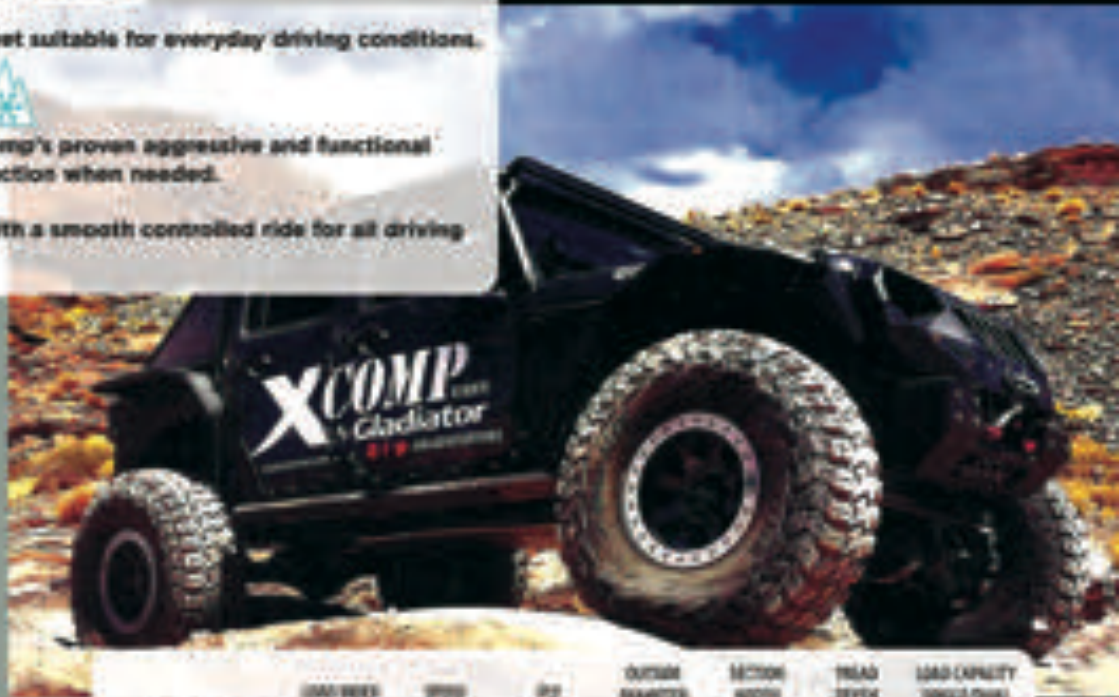
# XCOMP TIRES By Gladiator

# AT

## Tire Design & Construction Advantages

- This new cutting edge tire design has all the advantages of the X Comp M/T and ATR, with some very subtle changes.
- The tire casing has two full plies of polyester with full sidewall turn up, to enable a more comfortable ride, yet very strong and durable.
- The tread area is an aggressive design, yet suitable for everyday driving conditions.
- The AT is all season and snow flake rated. 
- The tire shoulder area incorporates X Comp's proven aggressive and functional design, giving drivers protection and traction when needed.
- In summary, this new tire is very quiet with a smooth controlled ride for all driving conditions on and off road.

**ENGINEERED  
TO  
PERFECTION®**



TIRE SIZE	LOAD INDEX	SPR	PR	OUTSIDE	SECTION	TREAD	LOAD CAPACITY
	WALL	INDEX	INDEX	DIAMETER	WIDTH	DEPTH	(WALL) (MAX)
17285/75R16	126/123	0	19	32.8	11.3	18	3156/3415
17285/70R17	121/119	0	19	32.8	11.5	18	3195/3519
33X12.50R17LT	118	0	19	32.5	12.5	16	3750
33X12.50R17LT	126	0	19	34.5	12.5	18	3750
33X13.50R17LT**	131	0	19	36.5	13.6	18	4900
40R13.50R17LT**	131	0	19	38.5	13.6	18	4900
E1275/60R16	123/120	0	30	32.1	11.6	14	3415/3885
33X12.50R18LT	118	0	19	32.5	12.5	16	3710
33X12.50R18LT	125	0	19	34.5	12.5	16	3415
P275/55R20 XL	117	1	19	31.8	11.2	13	2835
17285/55R20**	123/120	0	19	32.4	11.7	16	3305/3606
17285/55R20**	123/124	0	19	34.4	11.5	16	3880/3525
33X12.50R20LT	118	0	19	32.5	12.5	16	3600
33X12.50R20LT	121	0	19	34.5	12.5	16	3775
33X13.50R20LT**	127	0	19	36.5	13.6	18	3860
40R13.50R20LT**	131	0	19	38.5	13.6	18	4000
P275/55R21**	116	1	19	32.1	11.2	13	2881

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**IN REMEMBRANCE****Stanley William James Harper  
1933 - 2019**

We are truly saddened to learn of the passing of Stan Harper. He was a founding member of WCTDRA, in 1962, a long-time supporter of the association and a true pioneer in the industry. Our heartfelt condolences go out to his family and everyone at Harper's Tire (1931) Ltd.

**Obituary:**

STANLEY WILLIAM JAMES HARPER

August 1, 1933 - December 2, 2019

It is with great sadness and heartbreak that we announce the passing of Stanley William James Harper on December 2, 2019 at the age of 86 years. Stan was born in Calgary on August 1, 1933 and was the youngest of 5 children. Stan lived almost his entire life in Calgary.

He attended Central Memorial High School and went to the University of Alberta where he graduated with a degree in Petroleum Engineering. His professional career started with Mobil Oil where he stayed for several years before leaving to join his father's business, Harper's Tire (1931) Ltd.

Stan liked to volunteer his time for worthy causes. He was an active long-time charter member of the Calgary Lions Club serving as their president for several years. Stan was one of the founders of the Western Canada

Tire Dealers Association, he also served on their board of directors, was their president for 2 years and was inducted into their Hall of Fame as recognition of his contributions to the Tire Industry.

Stan was a great athlete and spent a lot of time playing tennis, golfing and skiing. He was a fan of all sports and coached minor hockey in his community for several years. He enjoyed watching hockey and was a season ticket holder of the Flames from the day they arrived in Calgary.

Stan and Bev loved to travel. They went all over the world together. Some of the highlights included Japan, South Africa, Hawaii, Europe and Australia.

Stan's family was very important to him. He did everything he could to support them in their endeavors and rarely missed a concert or sporting event. Stan especially loved his two Grandsons. He loved to watch them play sports and went to as many of their games and other events that he could.

Stan is survived by his wife Beverley, his sons Danny (Sally), Tom (Angie) and Michael (Loretta), his Grandsons Cleve and Riley, his sisters Joyce and Millie as well as numerous nieces, nephews, grandnieces and grandnephews. Stan was predeceased by his Father John, mother Marion, and brothers Jack and Don.

A memorial service was held at St Peter's Anglican Church (903 75th Ave SW Calgary AB) on Monday December 9, 2019 at 1PM. Reception followed at the Church Hall. Condolences, memories and photos may be shared and viewed on Stan's obituary at [www.McInnisandHolloway.com](http://www.McInnisandHolloway.com).

A tree will be planted in living memory of Stan Harper.

**BRIAN JAMES, FORMER RUBBER ASSOCIATION  
OF CANADA PRESIDENT, DIES AT 90**

— RUBBER & PLASTICS NEWS STAFF



Brian James

Brian James, 90, who served as president of the Rubber Association of Canada from 1985 to 1996, died Feb. 3.

From 1977 until he joined the RAC—now known as the Tire and Rubber Association of Canada—James served as president of Dunlop (Canada) Inc. and vice president-Americas for Dunlop Ltd. He had responsibility for Dunlop manufacturing in Canada, Latin America and the Caribbean.

James received a master's with honors from Oxford University and was an MIT Sloan Fellow at the London Business School.

During his tenure at the RAC, James made many important contributions to the Canadian rubber industry, according to current TRAC President and CEO Glenn Maidment.

For example, during negotiations for the original North American Free Trade Agreement, James and a few other key players negotiated a 10-year phaseout of tariffs to help domestic rubber producers adjust to open borders, Maidment said.

"During that same period he helped negotiate a duty remission program with the Feds that ultimately garnered close to a billion dollars of new investment in Canada—which is essentially why we still have a vibrant tire industry in Canada today," he said.

Maidment also said James was a mentor and personal friend to him and others in the rubber and tire industry. "He had an uncanny ability to bring people together and share knowledge and ideas for the betterment of our industry," the current TRAC CEO said.

He is survived by children Chris (Susan), Juliet (Steve), and Stephanie (Sal), along with nine grandchildren and four great-grandchildren.

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# WHY SOCIAL MEDIA MATTERS

— TIRE INDUSTRY ASSOCIATION



**S**ocial media. It's no secret that most of the connected world uses it.

According to Pew research, in January 2014, over 74% of online adults were on social media. Facebook alone has over 1.2 billion users. People can connect with each other, share photos, tag friends in posts, raise funds through crowd sourcing, talk about their interests, and discuss pop culture. But can it really help you grow your business?

The consumer buying process has changed drastically over the years. Thanks to the Internet, buyers now have more information than ever, putting them in complete control of the purchasing process. Conservative estimates claim that consumers are already 2/3 of the way through the purchase process before they ever encounter a salesperson. Sending out sales ads and pushy marketing materials is no longer effective. Consumers don't want to be sold, they want to

**Businesses now have to develop a relationship building strategy in order to gain the trust of the consumer and develop brand awareness.**

**Social media presents the perfect platform for doing this.**

make a decision based on their knowledge and experiences. Businesses now have to develop a relationship building strategy in order to gain the trust of the consumer and develop brand awareness.



Social media presents the perfect platform for doing this. Many business owners assume that social media is, well, strictly social. Social media is about engaging and connecting, but it isn't restricted to family and friends. These are things that businesses have to do today in order to win over consumers.

There are many different social media channels, but don't worry, your business doesn't have to be on all of them. Depending on what kind of business you're in, some channels will be more effective than others. For tire and automotive businesses, Facebook seems to be the best option to get started.

Before you dive right in, there are a few things that you have to consider. Who are you targeting? How will you engage them? How often should you post, and what kind of posts should they be? Some experts suggest the "lurk and observe" tactic. This is when you find a successful page that you think aligns with your goals, and you observe what they do for a few weeks before getting started. Once you decide which channel you are going to get started with, and how much time you are willing to invest, there are some guidelines for getting started on social media for your business.

*continued on page 17*

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- 1. Setting up your social media page** - In order for people to find your business on social media, you have to make sure your page has as much detail as possible. Make sure that you fill in all of the required fields, and include a detailed biography in the "About" section. You should try to include words and phrases that your potential customers are likely to search when looking for a business like yours. Social media searches are much like the major search engines, they will pick up content from your page and yield results to the searcher based on that content. Make sure that you use good quality photos for your profile and cover photos, and that you brand your page to resemble your website wherever possible. Your contact information should be current, detailed, and provide links to your website and other social media pages. You want to make it easy for people to connect with you.
- 2. Developing an audience** - Before you begin to see the benefits of social media, you need to develop an audience. Invite your business connections, customers and friends to "Like" your page. Develop a profile of your target audience: are you targeting a specific gender, age, location, profession, etc.? Once you've gotten started and you've been active for a few weeks, you can begin to evaluate whether your content is reaching your desired audience. Facebook offers insights into who has been viewing, liking, and sharing your posts. Do those people match the description of your target audience? If not, you may have to restructure your content or change your posting times. Interact with pages and groups within your industry.
- 3. Decide on a posting schedule** - How often do you plan on posting? According to a report from Fast Company, businesses should post to their Facebook page at least once a day. It is also important to distinguish between being informative and being annoying. If you are posting once a day and experience great results, you can probably safely increase it to twice a day. As far as posting times,

Fast Company suggests posting at around 10:00 am and 3:00 pm. In reality, posting times can vary across industries, so you have to find what works for you. You can determine the ideal posting time for your business by looking at your Facebook insights. The insights can show you what time of day your followers are on your page the most, i.e. when you will have the greatest chance of reaching the largest number of them.

- 4. Decide what will motivate your customers to engage with your Facebook page** - Depending on the type of business you operate, you should be posting content that will engage your customers. For a tire or automotive service business, your content should be focused on automobiles. For example, provide helpful tips on things such as how often to check fluids, have your tires rotated, etc. Share information about what's happening in your community, and at your business. Try to structure your posts to encourage feedback whenever possible.

Now that we have covered all of the basics, you are ready to get started on social media. Remember, developing a social media strategy for your business takes time and requires monitoring. Don't get discouraged if your posts aren't reaching your desired amount of people or aren't getting "Liked" right away. Keep at it, and keep monitoring the results. You will most likely have to make some changes and tweak your strategy along the way to get the best results. In the end, it will be worth it.

For many businesses, finding the time to devote to a social media strategy is the biggest challenge. In order to see the benefits, you have to maintain a steady flow of outgoing content and monitor the results frequently. More and more businesses are hiring dedicated social media managers. Others are hiring companies that offer social media management services. You have to decide what will work best for your business, but however you decide to make it happen, you need to make social media part of your marketing strategy.

## PIRELLI UPDATES CINTURATO P7 ALL SEASON PLUS LINE

— TIRE BUSINESS STAFF

Pirelli Tire North America Inc. has updated its range of North American-specific all-season tires with the launch of the Cinturato P7 All Season Plus II as the successor to the original All Season Plus model launched in 2012.

The Cinturato P7 All Season Plus II features a tread compound and "optimized" footprint for improved behavior on wet surfaces, Pirelli said, which aids in reducing the tire's wet stopping distance.

Pirelli's engineers focused on improving the tire's wet handling and wet traction, while maintaining the treadwear, winter traction, noise, comfort, dry handling and steering performance of the previous generation, Pirelli said.

Pirelli rolled out the Cinturato P7 All Season Plus eight years ago with the marketing message — "One tire, four seasons, no compromises" — to emphasize the line's four-seasons capabilities.

The new iteration launches in 30 sizes covering 16- to 20-inch rim diameters with 20 more sizes to be added in the coming months, Pirelli said, and is covered by a 70,000-mile limited tread wear warranty.

### Technical highlights include:

A "functionalized polymer" with increased silica content is used in the tread compound, which helps reduce stopping distances and enhance wet traction, handling and braking while maintaining the previous generation's treadwear, winter traction, noise, comfort, dry handling and steering performance, Pirelli said.

The compound also is used in the recently released Scorpion Verde All Season Plus II, Pirelli said.

The tire features a contact patch that is 5% larger than the predecessor model and features an "optimized" shape that helps improve wet performance, braking and handling over the previous generation.

The average selling price for the new tire is in the \$160 range, depending on size.



*Pirelli's Cinturato P7 All Season Plus II*

# OK TIRE ADDS TWO SENIOR EXECES TO SUPPORT GROWTH PLANS

— TIRE BUSINESS



VANCOUVER, British Columbia — OK Tire Stores Inc. has hired a pair of industry veterans, Dwayne Sawyer and Patrick O'Hara, to fill key management positions related to the franchisor's plans to expand and develop the business beyond its traditional retail strengths.



Dwayne Sawyer,  
Director, Commercial Business Group

Mr. Sawyer, a 30-plus-year industry veteran, was hired to be OK Tire's director, commercial business group, tasked with helping develop commercial business opportunities for the Vancouver-based group and its franchisees.

"There is huge untapped opportunity for OK Tire as we focus more and more on all aspects of our commercial business," according to OK Tire President and CEO Jim Caldwell, who lauded Mr. Sawyer for his "positive and thoughtful leadership style" and considerable experience in the commercial and fleet business.

***"There is huge untapped opportunity for OK Tire as we focus more and more on all aspects of our commercial business"***

***— OK Tire President and CEO Jim Caldwell***

The companies Mr. Sawyer has worked for during his career include Kumho Tire Canada, Giti Tire, Continental Tire Canada, MTC Tire Group and Kal Tire.



Patrick O'Hara  
National Director, Merchandising

As national director, merchandising, Mr. O'Hara will be responsible for the development and growth of OK Tire's e-commerce and other non-tire related products.

Mr. O'Hara comes to OK Tire from Thibert Group, where he held positions in sales and marketing in 11 years with the Quebec-based distributor of wheels, tools, trailers, automotive and recreational vehicle accessories.

"Patrick will lead the evolution of our non-tire product assortment for our dealers and brings to OK Tire an incredible background in the aftermarket accessories market," Chief Operating Officer Michael Rutherford said. "But, more importantly, he has an outstanding reputation within the industry for meeting the needs of his customers with urgency and genuine focus on win/win solutions. All of this combined with his approachable and sincere leadership style is why we are so excited to have Patrick join our incredible team of leaders".

These changes tie into the five-year strategic growth plan that OK Tire unveiled earlier this year, which includes \$75 million in investments in expanding the group's distribution capabilities across Canada to support its drive to recruit new franchisees and grow market share.



# BRIDGESTONE TARGETING TRUCK SEGMENT WITH AIRLESS TECHNOLOGY

LINDSAY CHAPPELL, AUTOMOTIVE NEWS



These Bridgestone tires are intended for commercial trucks.

Bridgestone Corp. expects its “airless tire” technology to be commercially available soon — but probably not in the way auto makers assume.

The Japanese company wants to get its non-pneumatic tire technology into the hands of commercial truck owners rather than onto ordinary passenger vehicles.

The tires — shown for the first time recently at the Consumer Electronics Show in Las Vegas — use a recycled thermoplastic “web” as their core, replacing the pressurized air of traditional tires. Bridgestone said it has developed and is preparing to market large tires that can support 5,000 pounds of weight.

The company first plans to launch a smaller and lighter version of them on ordinary bicycles, providing a fleet of airless-tire-equipped bikes at the 2020 Summer Olympics in Tokyo, where Bridgestone is the official tire maker.

Bridgestone will, more or less, skip over the world’s passenger vehicle market and dive into producing the tires for commercial trucks, Jon Kempel, executive director for new mobility solution engineering at Bridgestone Americas, told Automotive News — a Tire Business sister publication — at the CES.

It’s not so much a question of where the volume is, Mr. Kempel explained, it’s a matter of where the need is.

And where the interest is.

Truck fleet operators, he said, are driving the new technology.

“Fleet operators are asking us for these,” Mr. Kempel said. “This technology solves a problem for the, and it saves them money. Their job is to keep their trucks on the road, and you can’t do that when your tires are not properly inflated.

“On the truck side,” he added, “there’s an air-related issue every 8,000 miles. If they’ve got a truck that’s not running, it’s costing them money.”

The global truck market is smaller than the original equipment passenger vehicle market, but Mr. Kempel said that trucking still is a substantial business that needs innovative solutions.

Japan-based Bridgestone is the world’s largest tire producer, according to data collected for Tire Business’ Global Tire Report. Last year, it manufactured an estimated 180 million tires.

Bridgestone exhibited this year for the first time at the CES, hoping to promote its work in mobility solutions, the company said prior to the start of the show.

In addition to the airless tire prototypes shown at the exhibition, Bridgestone also showcased its “smart” tire technology for enhanced safety and “Webfleet” solutions for more efficient transportation.



Bridgestone plans to have a fleet of airless-tire bicycles at the 2020 Summer Olympic Games in Tokyo.

# MCMASTER UNIVERSITY CHEMISTS CLAIM BREAKTHROUGH IN RUBBER RECYCLING

— TIRE BUSINESS / EUROPEAN RUBBER JOURNAL



Michael Brook, lead author and a professor in the department of chemistry and chemical biology at McMaster University, claims the university has made a breakthrough in rubber recycling.

HAMILTON, Ontario — A team of chemists at Canada's McMaster University has discovered what the university is calling an "innovative way" to break down the rubber used in tires.

The process — described as "reductive silylation" — could lead to new recycling methods that have so far proved to be expensive, difficult and largely inefficient, McMaster said.

In a paper published by the journal *Green Chemistry*, Michael Brook, lead author and a professor in the department of chemistry and chemical biology at McMaster, claims the process efficiently breaks down the polymeric oils by breaking the sulfur-to-sulfur bond in tire rubber.

"The chemistry of the tire is very complex and does not lend itself to degradation — for good reason. ... The properties that make tires so durable and stable on the road also make them exceptionally difficult to break down and recycle," he said.

Mr. Brook likened the structure to a piece of fishnet.

"We have found a way to cut all the horizontal lines so instead of having a net, you now have a large number of ropes, which can be isolated and reprocessed much more easily," he explained.

In a video posted on the McMaster website, Mr. Brook likened the process to "molecular scissors" that can cut through the sulfur bonds.

In the paper's abstract, the researchers claim the one-step process yielded recovery rates of 56% for "complex" mixtures of rubber crumb from ground tires to 93% for butyl rubber inner tubes.

The abstract also states the recovered polymeric oils — after the removal of inorganic materials by filtration — were cross-linked to generate new elastomers that could be reinforced with the solids recovered in the initial reduction procedure.

According to the researchers, the new method could help to eliminate and prevent the major environmental concerns and dangers posed by stockpiled tires.

While promising, researchers cautioned that the new method had some limitations as it was expensive for industrial applications.

"We're working on it, but this is the first major step. This process closes the loop on automotive rubber, allowing old tires to be converted into new products," Mr. Brook added.

## AUSTRALIAN TIRE RECYCLER NOMINATED FOR ENVIRONMENTAL AWARD

— TIRE BUSINESS STAFF

HANOVER, Germany — Australian tire recycler Green Distillation Technologies has been nominated in the Environmental Achievement of the Year category in the annual Tire Technology International awards, along with Marlborough, New Zealand-based carbon innovator CarbonScape.

Green Distillation has developed a proprietary process to break down end-of-life passenger, truck and off-the-road tires into their component oil, carbon and steel. CarbonScape has patented technology for turning sawdust and waste biomass into high-purity carbon products, including graphite, according to a Green Distillation press release.

The two companies have discovered that the carbon produced by Green Distillation is highly compatible with CarbonScape's process for producing graphite, Green Distillation said.

"The deal between the two innovative companies solves a global



problem," the tire recycler said, noting that about 1.5 billion waste tires are generated every year worldwide, it said.

"What we have achieved so far is a world breakthrough, and we believe that, in time, our technology will eventually become the preferred means of recycling old tires throughout the world," said Trevor Bayley, Green Distillation chief operating officer.

The Tire Technology International awards, which are in their 12th year, will be announced at a dinner at the Tire Technology Expo in Hanover Feb. 26.

Green Distillation operates a tire processing plant in Warren, New South Wales, and plans to build another in Toowoomba, Queensland with more facilities planned in Australia. It also recently signed an agreement worth up to \$100 million to build 10 plants in the U.S. and another \$50 million to build five facilities in South Africa.



# MANY LESSONS LEARNED

## and some underway—on electric vehicle battery safety

— PETE BIGELOW, AUTOMOTIVE NEWS



*Chevy Volt battery damaged in a 2011 fire that erupted three weeks after a crash test*

**W**henever it comes, an influx of millions of electric vehicles on the nation's roads will bring with it new safety challenges.

Battery behavior remains a vexing subject, one that mechanics and first responders to collisions will need to be well versed in. But the industry need not wait until the electric future arrives to make such preparations.

Lessons learned about battery safety proliferate. Here's a quick rundown of some past and present safety challenges related to batteries and how they've been handled.

### Catching fire, then attention

It was the fire that awakened the industry and federal safety regulators. Three weeks after a government crash test in May 2011, a fire started in the lithium ion battery of a Chevy Volt.

A subsequent investigation revealed the battery compartment had been penetrated, and the battery's liquid cooling system ruptured. Starting the next year, General Motors made structural changes to better protect the Volt's battery packs.

But at the onset of an era of plug-in hybrid and battery-electric

offerings, the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration (NHTSA) wanted to know more. In the months that followed, the agency crash-tested four more Volts and conducted impact tests on six Volt battery packs. Three separate tests resulted in a "sustained fire," per a report.

Though the agency cautioned that the conditions that caused the initial fire were never replicated, the testing results showed the potential for fire hazards to develop, sometimes weeks after crashes, with little to no warning.

### Real-time monitoring

Monitoring drivers for fatigue and distraction has been an important component of driver-assistance features. But now there may be more attention turning to battery-monitoring.

Years after those Chevy Volt fires, keeping an eye on individual cells could help avoid such thermal-runaway instances, which occur with little or no warning.

"That's the issue; we need to monitor them," said Anna Stefanopoulou, director of the Energy Institute at the University of Michigan. "We need to monitor cell activity and interrogate them to know how they're doing and what they're doing."





*The exterior case of a thermal-damaged lithium ion battery that caught fire in a Japan Airlines' 787 in 2013 (left) and the redesigned battery (right).*

**787 Dreamliner grounded**

The potential concerns of lithium ion batteries aboard aircraft became all too real when a short circuit in a battery aboard a Japan Airlines flight in 2013 resulted in a thermal runaway that began in one of the battery's eight cells and spread to the adjacent cells. The incident led to a temporary grounding of the fledgling 787 Dreamliner fleet.

A subsequent investigation conducted by the National Transportation Safety Board (NTSB) found that shortcomings in both design and certification processes led to the fire. Boeing had ruled out the possibility of cell-to-cell propagation during development, and as a result, "thermal runaway was not thoroughly scrutinized by Boeing and FAA engineers," an NTSB report found.

Among the 15 safety recommendations the independent agency sent to the Federal Aviation Administration (FAA), Boeing and battery supplier GS Yuasa: Require manufacturers to demonstrate acceptable performance as part of the certification for any aircraft that incorporates permanent lithium ion batteries.

**Experience counts for something**

EVs might necessitate a shift in the way firefighters battle certain car fires. But Michael Gorin, emerging issues program manager at the National Fire Prevention Association, emphasizes they're not creating new risk. "I would not say an EV fire is any more challenging or dangerous than a fire in a car with an internal-combustion engine," he said. "It's a different set of tactics."

First responders have plenty of experience with vehicle fires, which number an estimated 171,500 every year on U.S. roads, according to the National Fire Data Center, a division of the Federal Emergency Management Administration. About one in eight fires that fire departments respond to is a highway vehicle fire, the agency says. That doesn't include fire department responses to collisions.

**To be continued**

The next chapter in battery safety may be written by NHTSA. Last month, the federal agency began a probe of an "alarming number of car fires that have occurred worldwide" in Tesla Model S and Model X vehicles.



*Battery case from a Tesla Model S after a noncrash-related fire in West Hollywood, Calif., in 2018*

Investigators zeroed in on software updates to the battery management systems. They've asked Tesla to provide responses related to updates and their impact on charging rates, charging capacity and thermal management during and after charging.

Tesla's ability to make software tweaks to batteries and other vehicle systems via over-the-air updates remains unmatched in the industry. NHTSA's investigation seems to ask whether such software versatility creates unintended battery-related consequences.

Responses from Tesla were due at the end of November.



# PROTECT THE TIRE BEAD TO PROTECT THE TIRE, DRIVER & TECHNICIAN



by David Sickels  
Tire Review

**T**here's an often overlooked reason tire inflation inspections should always be top of mind when servicing any vehicle that comes into your bays: protecting the tire bead.

Maintaining the proper levels of inflation in a vehicle's tires is crucial to keep drivers safe and the vehicle fuel-efficient. But there's another, often overlooked reason tire inflation inspections should always be top of mind when servicing any vehicle that comes into your bays: protecting the tire bead.

The tire bead is an integral component of any tire, and it can be found at the tire's inner circle where it connects to the wheel rim. The bead is made of heavy-duty rubber, fabrics and high-tensile wound steel cables called bead bundles. Two bead bundles can be found in every tire — one on the inner side and one on the outer side.

The main purpose of the bead is to keep the tire connected to the wheel, says Phil Mosier, Cooper Tire & Rubber Co.'s manager of commercial tire development, and all traditional passenger and commercial tires are designed with this component.

"The tire bead is a critical component of the tire — it helps securely fit the tire to the rim and seals in the inflation pressure so it doesn't leak from the tire/rim interface," Mosier explains. "Functionally, the bead also

serves as the anchor to secure the tire to the rim. The inflation pressure inside of the tire exerts tension on the tire's body ply — the body ply wraps around the bead in the lower sidewall of the tire. Thus, the bead is helping to restrain that tension from the body ply."



While there are multiple ways a technician could mount or dismount a tire, one of the best methods for protecting the tire bead is to use a tire changer. Both heavy-duty and standard tire changers aid in the removal and installation of tires onto wheels, but they achieve this in different ways, according to Kyle Harris, an account manager for Hennessy Industries, which manufactures Coats tire changers and wheel balancers.

Heavy-duty tire changers are generally hydraulic-powered and use either a hook or rollers to mount and demount tires. They also typically incorporate a lifting mechanism, as heavy-duty truck wheels weigh hundreds of pounds, Harris says. While standard tire changers work in a similar way, most utilize a bar and a duckbill to mount and demount tires and are electric- and air-powered.

Harris adds while the tire bead is designed to withstand high loads and immense pressure, technicians need to be patient throughout the tire

*continued on page 25*

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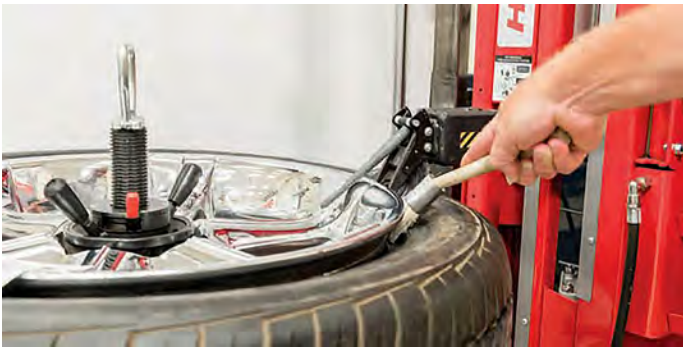
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mounting process to avoid inadvertent damage to the bead, as well as keep themselves out of harm's way.

"One of the most important safety tips regarding beads is to always verify correct tire and wheel sizing, and never try to mount a tire on an incorrect or damaged wheel. Most commonly, technicians might not have the bead in the proper position during demounting or mounting of the top bead. This can stress or break the cables that make up the bead," Harris says. "And, most importantly, always wear proper safety gear and utilize an inflation cage when [inflating the tires]."



Pete Liebetreu, vice president of marketing for Hunter Engineering, which manufactures a variety of tire service machines, adds that keeping technicians safe when mounting tires comes down to minimizing mounting stress.

"Use care, and use quality lubrication," Liebetreu advises. "Use professional equipment with sophisticated mount heads and press devices that minimize mounting stress, which can damage beads. Never inflate a torn bead; it can be extremely dangerous. Always use a safety cage for commercial tires and any passenger car tire over 40 psi."

Echoing Liebetreu, Harris added one of the most common ways a technician might inadvertently damage the tire bead is from not using enough lubrication on the bead when mounting or dismounting tires. He says it's good to remember that any routine tire service that's good for the tire is also good for the bead, including regularly rotating, balancing, aligning and, most importantly, maintaining proper pressure.

While commercial tire beads are typically built using more robust materials to handle the higher loads and heat the truck's components generate on the road, Rob Williams, senior director of TBR sales for Hankook Tire America, says regular maintenance, including routine pre- and post-trip tire inflation inspections by drivers, is especially critical to keeping the bead intact.

"Since the bead section is directly in contact with the rim, it is easily affected by heat generated from the rim, overloading, low air pressure, etc. In the context of commercial, overloading a tire via weight or road-generated heat at the bead site [increases] the risk of hardening the tire and ultimately reduces the lifetime of that area, [thus] increasing the risk of deformation/failure of the tire and rim assembly," he says. "In both cases, lack of maintenance can result in a tire burst or separation from the rim (de-bead)."

## HYUNDAI, HARMAN LAUNCH ROAD-NOISE CANCELING SYSTEM

— EUROPEAN RUBBER JOURNAL REPORT

Harman International, part of Samsung Electronics, has launched what it claims is the world's first active road-noise cancellation system for a production vehicle in partnership with Hyundai Motor Co.

The road noise active noise control (RANC) system reduces in-cabin noise by canceling out unwanted sound originating from the tires and road surfaces while driving, Harman International said.

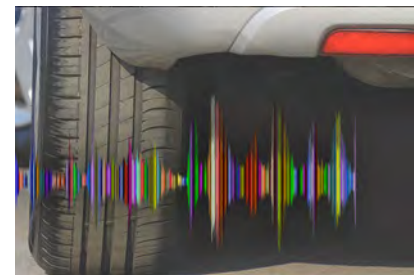
Hyundai's Genesis GV80 SUV is the first production car to feature the technology, which is based on Harman's HALOsonic suite of noise management technologies, the automotive audio specialist said.

Applying conventional NVH methods to reduce road noise significantly adds to the vehicle weight, thereby impacting fuel economy and emissions ratings, the company noted. On the Genesis SUV, the RANC control processor "uses reference signals received from acceleration sensors placed strategically along the suspension and chassis to predict noise

transferred into the cabin and to generate an anti-noise wave in real-time.

"Compute time and signal transfer speed are optimized to allow for an analysis of the intruding noise and the generation of the anti-noise within milliseconds, thereby preventing the noise from reaching the occupants' ears."

Error microphones constantly monitor the system performance in each seat location to ensure a more pleasant ride for all vehicle occupants, Harman said. The Genesis GV80 SUV was launched in Korea on Jan. 15, with further roll-outs, including in the U.S. expected by early summer.



# FISHER: WHAT WILL 2020 BRING FOR INDUSTRY?



by Peggy J. Fisher  
Tire Business

**C**an you believe it? We are at the start of a new decade in the New Millennium.

**2019 seemed to go by so fast. I don't know about you, but I thought I'd be dead by now. What a shock and what a very happy surprise.**

Since we're still alive and have a whole new year ahead of us, it's probably a good idea to drag out and dust off my old crystal ball again and see what 2020 has in store for us. Who knows, maybe it will be filled with more good surprises.

## The economy

Let's first look at the economy because this is what drives trucking and your commercial tire business. 2018 was the best year in history for the trucking industry; 2019 — not so much.

According to the International Monetary Fund (IMF), the U.S. gross domestic product (GDP) — which is an indicator of economic growth — grew 2.9% in 2018 and just 2.4% in 2019.

Tariffs have been the root cause in slowing down not only the U.S. economy but the entire global economy as well. The tax cuts in 2017 boosted manufacturing, a primary source of freight, to record levels, but the tariffs stunted that growth and hastened the economy's return to a more normal level in 2019.

Consumer and business confidence have been affected by political dysfunction and the China-U.S. trade war, which brought a wave of new tariffs that disrupted global supply chains. The uncertainty has prompted businesses, especially those in manufacturing, to be more cautious about investing.

As a result, industrial production, manufacturing, construction and durable goods orders for 2019 were flat or worse.

The good news is that thanks to the growth in e-commerce, consumers are still spending and keeping trucks plying the roads delivering the good stuff they buy and retail and consumption activity makes up 80% of the economy.

As a fun fact to note, e-commerce is about 11% of total retail sales. However, when you drop out automobile dealers, gas stations, restaurants and bars where e-commerce is not a factor, it now accounts for 20% of core retail sales.

The tight labor market is also a concern for businesses. In November last year, the U.S. unemployment rate dropped to 3.5%, which is considered by many to be "full employment." This tight labor market will continue this year.

This is a concern since to maintain a 2% growth rate, 180,000-200,000 new jobs are needed every month. The country will have to either find a way to get more workers or drastically improve productivity.

As a result of all of these factors the IMF has forecast the U.S. economy to expand by 2.1% in 2020, which will be the 12th consecutive year of growth, albeit at a slower pace than the past couple of years.

## Freight market, rates

While the economy grew overall in 2019, trucking tonnage experienced a monthly roller coaster ride, rising one month and dropping the next. Nonetheless it was still a pretty good year in terms of freight volume. Carriers didn't do well in 2019, however, because freight rates fell and cost increases such as driver compensation and insurance didn't.

Small carriers that are dependent upon the spot market experienced a sharp drop in spot rates last year which resulted in a surge in for-hire carriers going out of business. (Spot market rates in trucking are the shipping prices that exist right now. They represent how much it costs to ship cargo if you were to get contracted on the spot.)

Sky-rocketing insurance premiums of around 20% to 30% caused by incredibly high jury awards in accident cases also helped push many carriers over the edge. In fact more than twice as many motor carriers (640) closed their doors in the first half of 2019 than in all of 2018 (310).

However, this year the general outlook is for a gradual firming of rates due to truck availability being more constrained compared with 2019. Contract rates should fall 5% to 10% this quarter from last year but firm up as the year progresses by about 2%, which would bring them back to 2018 levels. Spot market rates should bounce back 4% to 6% by the second half of this year.

## Driver shortage

The driver shortage remains fleets' top concern according to a survey conducted by the American Transportation Research Institute (ATRI) late last year.

According to the American Trucking Associations (ATA), the industry was short about 61,000 drivers at year-end 2018, which was an all-time high. The industry and the U.S. government are looking at ways to address this problem, including opening interstate commercial driver licenses to younger drivers.

Currently drivers must be 21 to drive trucks across state lines, but younger drivers can drive trucks intrastate legally in most states. Efforts are also being made to attract more women into the industry. Women make up 47% of the U.S. workforce but only 6% of truck drivers.

## Fuel

Prices for both gasoline and diesel remained fairly stable and relatively low in 2019, averaging \$2.60 and \$3.06 per gallon, respectively. However, there will be one exceptional factor that could impact diesel fuel prices this year.

The International Maritime Organization (IMO) sets regulations for ocean-going vessels like container ships. Beginning Jan. 1, it is requiring all ships that used to burn almost 4 million barrels a day of low-grade diesel fuel that is high in sulfur and emits a high level of pollutants into the atmosphere to either convert to low-sulfur fuel commonly used by commercial trucks or use million-dollar, maritime emission scrubbers to reduce emissions.





Because the maritime industry was not given much time to comply and install scrubbers, it is estimated about 75% to 80% of these vessels will switch to low-sulfur diesel.

The U.S. Energy Information Administration (EIA) believes this mandate could push the price of diesel higher by as much as 20 - 25 cents. However, these price hikes should not last long as refineries adjust their production to accommodate this new demand. For the year, the EIA forecasts diesel to average \$3.09 and gasoline \$2.56 per gallon.

### Truck and trailer sales

The large number of new truck sales in 2018 that were due to customers desperate to move goods and willing to pay high rates resulted in the fastest fleet growth since 1999. Now there are about 75,000 more tractors in the market than are needed to haul the current level of freight.

Near the end of 2018 active capacity was up 10% over early 2018 despite slowing economic growth. As a result the overcapacity in the industry now is estimated to be about 13% compared with January 2018.

Class 8 production should end up around 353,000 units for 2019 when the final numbers come in. But demand in 2020 will return to a more normal level and drop to around 260,000 units as fleets will only be replacing equipment rather than expanding their fleets.

This replacement cycle should last for three years into 2022. Last fall this new purchase cycle forced Daimler Trucks North America, Navistar Inc., Volvo Trucks North America and Mack Trucks to announce that they are all taking steps to reduce build rates.

The dry van trailer market, however, is still going strong even as freight growth is slowing. At year-end large fleets ordered their normal numbers of trailers to cover their annual replacements, which reflects confidence in the freight market in 2020.

The vocational trailer markets such as flatbed and dumps are struggling and will continue to do so until the industrial sectors of the economy begin to strengthen. It is expected that trailer production should come in at around 325,000 in 2019 and ease back to 274,000 in 2020.

Trailer manufacturers too are concerned that the extra manufacturing capacity trailer makers added in the last couple of years to handle trailer fleet expansions is now not needed and they will have to pull back on their production. Until this happens it is expected that trailers will be priced lower by some trailer makers to fill added production lines until capacity gets in sync with the demand.

### Government's impact

A government action that is vital to the trucking industry is the U.S.-Mexico-Canada Agreement (USMCA), the trade deal that overhauls the North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA). This pact will take effect in 2020 after being approved by the House of Representatives. The Senate is expected to follow suit early this year after the impeachment trial of President Trump.

Among other provisions, the USMCA requires vehicle makers in all three countries to obtain 75% of their automotive content from within North America to qualify for duty-free benefits in transporting vehicles and parts across borders. This is up from 62.5% under NAFTA.

Also at least 40% of vehicles' components would have to originate in places where hourly wages are at least \$16.

The pact also requires Mexico to allow workers to form independent unions, which is different from the mostly employer-controlled unions under NAFTA that kept Mexican wages much lower than those in the U.S. or Canada. The labor provisions of the USMCA are expected to create an estimated 175,000 jobs in the U.S., the Trump administration is claiming.

This pact is essential to trucking since the vast majority of trade between Mexico and Canada is moved on trucks with \$772 billion worth of goods crossing our borders every year. This supports nearly 90,000 Americans in trucking-related jobs and generates \$12.6 billion in annual revenue for the trucking industry.

The biggest source of change and uncertainty for the trucking industry as well as just about every other U.S. industry is the trade war between the U.S. and China. The trade war — which resulted in the U.S.'s imposing import taxes on \$360 billion in Chinese products and China taxing \$120 billion in U.S. exports — continues to wreak havoc on American exporters and manufacturers and has affected the economy and the freight generated for the trucking industry.

After more than 18 months of economic sanctions and tough talk, it was announced on Dec. 13 that an initial agreement, Phase 1 of the final trade deal, had been reached. As a result President Trump agreed not to hike tariffs on \$250 billion in Chinese goods to 30% from 25%.

In addition, the Chinese agreed to buy \$40 billion to \$50 billion worth of American agricultural products annually along with implementing new guidelines on how it manages its currency. China will also strengthen protection for American intellectual property and give financial service companies more access to China's market.

Mr. Trump then canceled plans to impose tariffs on nearly \$160 billion in Chinese consumer goods on Dec. 15, and China also scrapped plans for new tariffs set to go into effect that day, too.

The resolution of the trade war between China and the U.S. has a high upside for trucking as it would accelerate the global economy and spur a strong rebound in manufacturing and commodity pricing. Talks are expected to continue immediately and extend well into 2020.

Also of great importance to the trucking industry is the Federal Motor Carrier Safety Administration's (FMCSA) current overhaul of its Hours-of-Service rules. Its proposed changes announced last August give fleets and drivers more flexibility without compromising safety.

The proposed changes would:

- Extend the radius of the short-haul exemption to 150 air miles from 100. Currently only fleets that operate within a radius of 100 air miles are not required to keep a record of duty status or take a 30-minute break.
- Extend the maximum on-duty limit of short-haul fleets to 14 hours, up from 12 hours.
- Increase the maximum 14-hour duty period by two hours to allow for up to 13 hours of drive time and up to 16 hours of on-duty for "adverse conditions" such as weather.
- Split up the 10-hour off-duty rest period, either by taking eight or seven hours in the sleeper berth and then spending two or three hours in off-duty status. The off-duty breaks would not count toward a driver's 14-hour on-duty window.
- Allow drivers to satisfy the 30-minute break requirement by using off-duty status. Drivers can extend a break for up to three hours without counting it as on-duty.

The FMCSA is now reviewing comments from the industry that it received and should be finalizing the rule sometime this year.

Jan. 1 was supposed to be the start of the California Air Resources Board's (CARB) enforcement of the federal Greenhouse Gas (GHG) Phase 2 emission standard for trailers.

This regulation for the first time requires new trailers to meet emission standards by being equipped with features that reduce aerodynamic drag, low rolling resistance tires, tire pressure monitoring/automatic tire inflation systems and weight reduction measures.

CARB decided not to enforce this regulation since there is litigation challenging the federal GHG trailer requirements, which is preventing the EPA from enforcing these rules as well. At this time no one knows when or if this regulation will ever be enforced.

The 2015 FAST Act is the five-year highway authorization measure that is due to expire in October. Congress has been trying to come up with a way to pay for fixing the nation's roads and bridges and reduce chronic congestion on the highways for years.

Even though investing in the country's transportation infrastructure has the clear support of the American public, it has not been able to get the job done since it is reticent to increase taxes. The current fuel tax rate (24.4 cents per gallon for diesel and 18.4 cents per gallon for gas) was set in 1993.

However, the need to improve the country's roads is occurring at a time when ground transportation is being transformed by advances in vehicle autonomy, manufacturing, warehousing, supply chain automation, increasing e-commerce and consumers' demand for faster and more responsive deliveries.

It appears that Mr. Trump's impeachment inquiry has distracted Congress, and we probably will have many short-term extensions, just like in the past, when the October deadline passes without a solution.

## Truck tire sales

According to the U.S. Tire Manufacturers Association (USTMA), medium truck tire shipments to original equipment truck and trailer manufacturers rose 2.7% in 2019 to 6.6 million units from 6.5 million in 2018, while replacement truck tire shipments fell 11.7% to 19.2 million from 21.8 million units.

The association has not released its forecast for 2020 yet, but it is safe to assume that OE shipments will see a drop of at least 5%, while replacement truck tire shipments should see single-digit growth compared with 2018.

Retreading should continue to profit from the tariffs that have eliminated lower-priced Chinese tires and retreaders' efforts to educate fleets on the benefits of retreads, the advancements in the retread manufacturing process, and the impact sustainable solutions can have on a fleet's bottom line. These factors should result in single-digit growth in retreading in 2020.

## Truck tire prices

The easing economy will most likely balance out the supply and demand for truck tires that was exacerbated by the sharp drop in Chinese truck tires coming into the country as a result of the combined 69% tariffs imposed by the International Trade Commission last year and raised again by the U.S.-Chinese trade war.

This year there will be some upward pressure on tire prices due to increasing raw-materials costs.

U.S. domestic production alone cannot meet the trucking industry's demand for tires, but with lower OE tire demand and the influx of truck tires from Vietnam, Thailand, Malaysia, etc. replacing Chinese production, supply should be eased.

## Technology trends

Technology is rapidly transforming the trucking industry at a rate never seen before. Naturally, if trucks and truck operations change, so will truck tires and truck tire dealers and service providers.

The biggest change occurring right now is the electrification of Class 8 trucks along with light-duty delivery trucks and vans used to deliver freight in the last mile. Most truck manufacturers in North America and Europe are working on developing electric trucks.

In 2019 their efforts gained momentum with more investment, more prototypes unveiled, and more deployments in real-world freight operations.

Electric trucks hold great potential for reducing diesel expenses and helping the transportation industry meet existing and future emissions regulations in markets around the world. At this stage, though, these trucks come with higher costs than diesel models, as well as vehicle range limitations and added weight that can reduce payload capacity.

Electric trucks have created the need for specific tires that can handle higher torque and the scrubbing and tire wear that quicker accelerations from electric motors apply to the axle ends. They also have to weigh less in order to extend the range of these vehicles and maintain payload capacity.

So, it doesn't look like 2020 is going to be a bad year, but it's probably not going to be a stellar year either. Fleets are cautiously optimistic and were given a ray of hope recently that saber rattling over trade is decreasing and freight tonnage might gain strength this year.

This should bode well for the commercial tire market as replacement sales should increase somewhat, supply should improve, and retreading should have the best year it's had in a while.

But whatever happens, what the new year brings to you will depend largely on what you bring to the new year. So bring on your best!

Happy New Year!



## CONTINENTAL APP HELPS FARMERS CALCULATE AG TIRE PRESSURE, LOAD

— TIRE BUSINESS REPORT

FORT MILL, S.C.—Continental A.G. has developed a mobile service app for farmers and others in the agricultural sector that allows them to calculate proper tire pressures for varying load conditions.

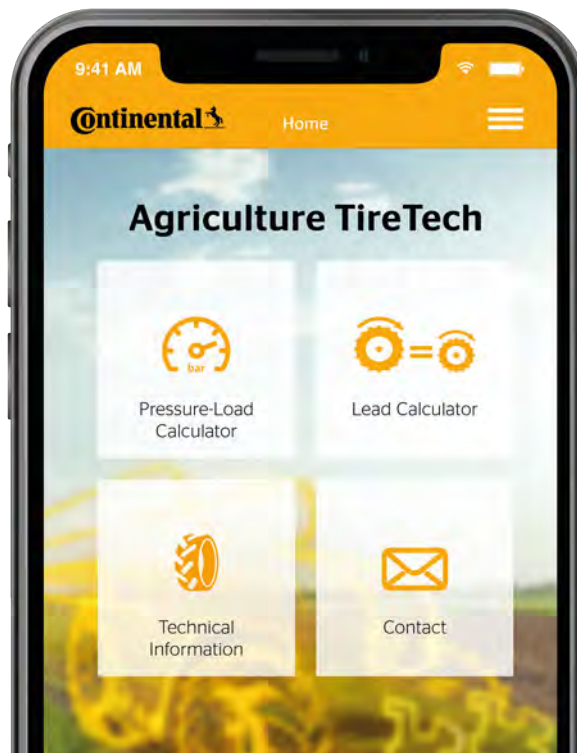
Dubbed “Agriculture TireTech,” the app is designed to help users determine the correct ag tire pressures according to the particular application being considered, Continental said. By adjusting tire pressures accordingly, farmers can reduce soil compaction, reduce tire wear and operate their equipment more efficiently, which in turn lowers fuel consumption.

The app, which Conti said is an extension of its portfolio of digital services for customers and dealers, is available in the app stores for iOS and Android systems.

The app also offers a range of technical information on Continental agricultural tires, including a lead calculator that compares the rolling circumferences of all Continental ag tires and indicates whether the tires chosen for a specific job are applicable with the mechanical ratio of the user’s tractor.

“The customer is always the focus at Continental,” Ivonne Bierwirth, head of marketing at Continental Commercial Specialty Tires, said in a statement. “With the new service app, we are offering farmers, dealers and contractors exactly the service they need to use our tires efficiently and resource-saving—digital, compact and always at hand.”

In North America, Continental re-entered the agricultural tire field in mid-2018 after a 14-year hiatus.



Continental launched its new agriculture tire service app “Agriculture TireTech” for iOS and Android.

## YOKOHAMA LAUNCHES 114R UWB REGIONAL-HAUL TRAILER TIRE

— TIRE BUSINESS



SANTA ANA, Calif.—Yokohama Tire Corp. has unveiled its latest regional-haul trailer tire, the EPA SmartWay-verified 114R Ultra Wide-Base (UWB) as a successor to the RY407.

The 114R is available in size 445/50R22.5. An additional size, 455/50/22.5, will be offered in early next year.

“The 114R UWB is specifically designed to meet the demands of high-scrub operations,” Tom Clauer, Yokohama’s senior manager of commercial and OTR product planning, said in a statement. “It features superior cut and chip resistance, extended tread life and is optimized for fuel efficiency.”

The company said other benefits of the 114R include:



- **Long-lasting performance:** The 16/32nds-inch deep groove depth provides extra-long tread life. Also, Yokohama’s zero-degree belt creates a consistently stable footprint for long, even wear.
- **Durable construction:** Yokohama’s advanced compound offers cut and chip resistance without sacrificing rolling resistance or wear performance. Plus, funnel-shaped step grooves prevent stones and other debris from reaching the bottom of the grooves, where casing damage can often occur.
- **Fuel efficiency:** Ground contact pressure is uniformly distributed, which results in greater stability, flawless tracking and improved fuel efficiency.

For more details Yokohama’s commercial tires, visit [yokohamatruck.com](http://yokohamatruck.com).

# COLORADO REPAIR SHOP OWNER INVENTS TIRE INSTALLATION TOOL

— BRUCE DAVIS, bdavis@crain.com



Kevin and Jennifer Robinson hold the 'best new product' award they won at the 2019 Specialty Equipment Market Association Show.

DENVER — File this one under the “Necessity is the mother of invention” maxim.

Kevin Robinson, a Denver-area car repair shop owner, has designed and patented a shop tool that is built to make tire rotations and new tire installations less strenuous, thereby minimizing the risk of injury from lifting heavy wheels and tires.



The product, dubbed TRAC (Tire Rotation Assistance Cart), was recognized at the recent SEMA Show as the best new product in the Tools & Equipment category.

Mr. Robinson said he was inspired to design the TRAC after watching techs in his shop, Clean Cars of Denver, struggle with handling tires and wheels during tire servicing.

The TRAC is a mobile tool that supports and lifts/lowers the tire/wheel assembly and allows technicians to move the assembly from one wheel position to another without having to lift or lower it themselves.

The TRAC uses a Quick-Lift hydraulic pump that allows for precise height adjustments and support, Mr. Robinson said, and steel base rollers in the cradle to permit rolling the tire for precise alignment with the wheel studs.

Locking swivel-stem casters in the base provide mobility, while a telescoping support bar keeps tires securely in place.

The unit is designed to support up to 500 pounds and can accommodate tires with outside diameters of up to 43 inches, Mr. Robinson said.



Since showing the device at SEMA, Mr. Robinson has secured orders from the California and Colorado departments of transportation and is in negotiations with a major auto parts distribution chain about supplying it.



photo : liftwithtrac.com

He said he contacted the American Lift Institute (ALI) about certification but was told since the TRAC's capacity is under 1,000 pounds and doesn't rely on a power source, it doesn't fit any of its categories.

In addition to the safety, ergonomic and productivity advantages of the TRAC, Mr. Robinson mentioned another potential benefit: less concern about damaging a customer's vehicle in a day and age where some vehicles come equipped with \$5,000 custom brake rotor packages.

Mr. Robinson and his wife Jennifer have formed TRAC L.L.C. to support the new business venture.



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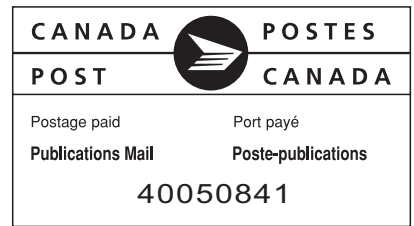
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