

Snow Tire Use Question

Dear NETS Members,

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Jeri Hall of GE asked a question regarding the use of snow tires.

Responses are provided below. Please note I have not included company names.

Let me know if you would like to speak to any of the respondents and I will make the arrangements.

And please contact me if you have any questions or suggestions.

Jack Hanley

NETS

Executive Director

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QUESTION

From: Hall, Jeri (GE Healthcare) [mailto:Jeri.Hall@med.ge.com]

Sent: Thursday, January 07, 2010 11:29 AM

To: Jack Hanley

Subject: RE: Email Process for Asking/Responding to Questions Posed by NETS Members...

GE Healthcare currently does not automatically supply snow tires for its fleet vehicles. We currently have AWD vehicles available to employees; however we do have some areas of the country that are saying they must have them. The new vehicles we provide have a special wheel size so getting these "snow tires" has been difficult because there are not tires available in some sizes.

I would be interested in hearing what other companies are doing for this - specifically,
(1) do companies in NETS provide snow tires for their Fleet Vehicles? And
(2) If yes, and they find the snow tires needed are not available (i.e., size not available), what course of action do they take (i.e., chains, purchase another type of tire or provide a different vehicle with AWD to employee or do nothing.)

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RESPONSES

- 1) The majority of our vehicles are 4 wheel drive, particularly in areas where snow would be a concern. So, we don't really get any requests for snow tires.

I am confident though that we would provide them if someone needed them. (We have changed out tires for people who do a lot of driving on gravel roads, etc.)

(My answers are based on the US experience by the way.)

- 2) ... only has passenger vehicles (sedans) so we have not run into a problem getting snow tires as it relates to size. Because all of our cars are equipped with all season tires, the snow tires have to be requested by the driver and some or all of their territory must be defined as a snow belt geography . Also, all drivers with designated snow belt territories automatically receive a AWD vehicle.
- 3) Fleet policy prohibits snow tires. Employees in areas where chains are allowed by law may purchase and expense chains. There is a new type of tire chain called "spider" chains that are easier to apply and do not require the driver to lay the chains out, drive onto them and then attach. (this is a really problem for many folks)

We also provide AWD vehicles in what we have determined as snow states these cars are fitted with all season tires.

Anything to do with snow, ice and tires are very emotional issues and I will guess that drivers in the Northwest (Oregon, Idaho, Utah - think mountain passes) or New England (NH, Maine, Upstate NY) are the ones who are demanding the snow tires.

The cost of the tires and putting them on the vehicle is one issue but a larger problem for us was summer storage. It seemed that we were purchasing new snow tires yearly for some folks (could not find them, did not fit a new vehicle) and that was really wasteful.

It really comes down to the drivers perceived access to customers (home, ski resorts etc) -- not driver safety. The safest action to take is stay off the road when in deep snow or ice and wait until the roads are cleared.

- 4) ...does not automatically provide snow tires for our company vehicles. If a driver is in a heavy snow area then their area manager must approve them. If a snow tire is not available in the original equipment size, then we will authorize snow tires in an alternate size. Chains are automatically authorized in mountain pass areas where they are required by law.
- 5) We authorize snow tires for anyone who requests them.

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6) We provide snow tires only for those in the snow belt region. Each instance is reviewed/approved by the driver's manager and our Maintenance Assistance Provider. We have not had a problem acquiring tires for our fleet type; however, the cost is significant.

7) We do not supply snow tires unless there are very specific situations requiring them.

I believe that in cases where there is an unusual wheel size and snow tires are necessary, fleets should purchase snow tire **packages** which include the snow tires mounted on appropriate size wheels.

8) All our cars are AWD and we use standard all season tires. We have vehicles in heavy snow areas and have not found the need to use an aggressive tread. In addition, those areas that normally have heavy snow fall know how to remove it quickly.

9) We use all weather tires on the vehicles and do not add snow tires. For those locations in northern climates where heavy snow can be expected (i.e. Colorado, Nebraska, Minnesota, etc.) AWD vehicles are options for employee selection

10) If the tires are not available the driver has to wait until they are. We have experienced this most with brand new models. It takes 6 months to a year sometimes for the tire manufacturers to catch up.

11) We provide snow tires for representatives that are located in identified states (15). We have not had any difficulty in finding tires that fit our vehicles.

12) It's not clear to me if this question is a global or US based question. I can say that we provide AWD vehicles in "snowbelt" states in the US. Outside of the US it varies by country, most are supplying snow tires as necessary. I'm not aware of the snow tire challenges that is mentioned below.

13) ...provides Winter Tires (Snowflake symbol on sidewall of tire) for all Medium and light pick-up trucks, cars, SUV's and vans for a total of 520 vehicles
We have not run in to the situation where the tires have not been available.

14) Question 1

First comment is having all wheel drive vehicles is a benefit over two wheel drive vehicles.

In Europe there are several countries where snow tyres are compulsory (Austria, Germany, Finland, Sweden, Latvia) This results in owners maintaining two sets of tyres/rims that are exchanged for the winter period. The government usually specifies the dates for changing. The additional cost for these is due to the additional wheel rims because you do get the wear out of both sets of tyres also the storage of the tyres & rims not being used can be inconvenient for some people with limited space.

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There are some countries (UK, France, Spain, Italy) where it is not a legal requirement although in the countries that regularly experience snow/ice in only parts of the country (northern France/Northern Italy) there are road signs specifying snow chains are recommended to be carried in the vehicle.

Some countries also fit spikes to their tyres although these are illegal when there is no snow/ice due to the damage they may cause to the dry road surface.

Question 2

Countries that do not legislate the use of snow tyres usually advise people to only drive if it is essential and then to take additional caution when driving.

It is a fact that where standard tyres are used in snow conditions the number of car crashes increases substantially.

Snow tyres as well as giving better traction also have reduced braking distances compared with normal tyres in snow/ice conditions.

There are intermediate tyres that are recommended for environments of less than 7 degrees C, which give better traction/braking than standard tyres although not as good as full snow tyres in snow/ice conditions.