

Rubber Makers Claim Survey of Scrap Tires Show Age Doesn't Determine Tire Life

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The Rubber Manufacturers Association (RMA) presented NHTSA with the results of a scrap tire survey claiming that the results show chronological age doesn't determine tire service life. The association presented the data at the recent government – industry meeting in an attempt to address the continual questions about tire service life and the necessity of expiration dates.

The survey was based on tires removed from service in five geographical regions of the U.S. The RMA collected information on randomly selected trailer loads of scrap tires from scrap tire processors' facilities. A total of 14,271 tires from seven locations were examined for the date code, repairs, tread wear, and road damage.

The RMA's primary observation was that, based on the date codes, there was no spike in the data that indicated tires were being removed from service at a particular time and as a result concluded there is no "magic date" when a tire is taken out of service and "chronological age" does not determine service life of a tire.

The survey results show that most tires are removed from service because of wear, followed by road damage.

According to Sean Kane, President of Safety Research & Strategies, the RMA survey can't determine whether tire age is an issue because it looks at the wrong tires -- those that have removed from service due to wear and road damage. "What would be meaningful," says Kane, "is to look at those that have had tread-belt separations, or tire claims data—the very data that Congress required tire makers to submit to NHTSA and the RMA is suing to keep confidential."

One notable observation was that 17.4 percent of tires had some type of repair and of those repaired, 87.5 percent were considered "improper" patch or plug only repairs, not the industry recommended combination patch/plug.