



How Important is your tire tread?

Worn tires—especially bald ones—can be deadly on wet roads, where the grooves aren't deep enough to channel water out from beneath the tread. The result is hydroplaning, where the tread skims the water's surface and the vehicle no longer responds to the steering wheel. Wet-weather braking and snow traction also decrease as tires wear.

Tires are considered bald when one or more of their grooves reaches $2/32$ of an inch deep, compared with about $10/32$ of an inch for new tires (tread wear is usually measured in $1/32$ -inch increments). Manufacturers have made bald tires easier to spot by placing a series of molded horizontal bars at the base of the grooves. The bars become flush with surrounding tread when wear reduces a groove's depth to $2/32$ of an inch. That is also the point where tires will flunk a state safety inspection—and where tread must be worn for you to collect on a tire's tread-wear warranty.

But since rainy, snowy days are inevitable in most parts of the country, tires with tread are the best option for safe driving. Tread patterns also allow the tire to dig into the ground's surface for better grip, such as when driving on sand, dirt, or mud.