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Bayou State Tire Dealer News

LOUISIANA INDEPENDENT TIRE DEALERS ASSOCIATION

Inside:

- ▶ President's Report
- ▶ Industry Briefs
- ▶ 2008 Scholarship Winners
- ▶ Industry Related Articles



"Total new tire and retread sales are down and accounts receivable are becoming a major concern for many dealers." "But I think we have to be a little extra careful considering fuel prices and the unsettled economy."

VOLUME 4, ISSUE 4
SUMMER 2008

"A SIGN OF THE TIMES"

Full Article On Page 12

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Bayou State Tire Dealer News



**LOUISIANA
INDEPENDENT
TIRE DEALERS ASSOCIATION**

Bayou State Tire Dealer News is published four times annually by the Louisiana Independent Tire Dealers Association.

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THE BAYOU STATE TIRE DEALER NEWS

Louisiana Independent Tire Dealers Association

From the President, Chet Simpson

Dear Members,

“ Success usually comes to those who are too busy to be looking for it, ” Henry David Thoreau. Now that Summer is here, everyone will stay busy, because it looks like it will definitely be a hot one, which is *very good for business!* The high cost of gas makes the customers much more aware of the importance of keeping their vehicles running at optimal proficiency, therefore, increasing preventative maintenance, engine diagnosis, and tire sales. Also, as we all know, living in the south, requires the A/C to work year round! This will have people rushing to the shop to ensure their AC's are working in optimal conditions!

Along with the increasing temperatures, LITDA is working on heating up membership for the 2008-2009 year! Please tell all of your industry partners about the great benefits of being a member of the LITDA, because your support helps ensure the success of the tire industry in Louisiana. Along with the great benefits offered, do not forget to mention the upcoming 2009 Annual Convention and Tradeshow at the Beau Rivage Casino and Resort. Please make plans to attend, because this years convention will be unique and will definitely be exciting! Additional information will be soon to follow, so please be aware. You can also contact myself or the LITDA staff to discuss any additional matters.

Along with the many benefits of the association, the LITDA staff, helped to provide legislative and regulatory representation at the capital this year. Now that the Louisiana legislative session has come to a close for 2008, all of the tire industry issues being tracked by the Louisiana Independent Tire Dealers Association have been disposed of, and we can now take an opportunity to consider the future. The Louisiana Legislature is made up of large number of new legislators, which has made for some significant changes in how the legislature conducts business. I am excited about the future of our industry and our state with this new legislature and I hope you are too. In order to help guide our industry in the right direction, it is important for each of us to create a channel of communication with our elected officials in our areas, and become a resource for them on the tire industry. I hope you will take the time to meet and get to know your legislators!

Thank you,



Chet Simpson
LITDA President



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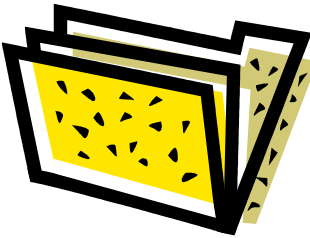
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Two more legislators jump on the 'Right to Repair' bandwagon

June 2, 2008

The Motor Vehicle Owners' Right to Repair Act (HR 2694) gained two more supporters recently when Reps. Charles Rangel (D-N.Y.) and Heath Shuler (D-N.C.) declared their support for the pending legislation.

"The growing Congressional support for the Right to Repair Act demonstrates the commitment by many members of Congress to ensuring that their constituents, and not the large car companies, retain the choice of where to have their vehicle serviced and repaired," says Kathleen Schmatz, CEO and president of the Automotive Aftermarket Industry Association (AAIA). "If motorists are forced back to the dealer for service and repairs, particularly if there is no dealership in their area, convenient and affordable auto repair will become a thing of the past."

The Right to Repair Act was introduced in Congress to ensure that repair shops have the same access to safety alerts and repair information as franchised new car dealers. For a complete list of co-sponsors and a copy of the Right to Repair Act, visit www.righttorepair.org.

Yokohama will adjust consumer tire prices up to 6%

June 3, 2008

"Due to continued record increases in the costs of raw materials and energy," Yokohama Tire Corp. says it will adjust prices on its consumer tires by up to 6%, effective July 1, 2008. There will be in-line cost adjustments as well, which will be announced at a later date. Commercial light truck, medium truck and off-the-road tires will not be affected by the increase, according to the company. "We are doing our best to contain our costs, but raw materials, energy and transportation costs continue to reach record-high escalations," says Dan King, vice president of sales. "These costs, unfortunately, have to be reflected in Yokohama's pricing." "It's a volatile business climate right now that's causing our costs to soar," adds Jim MacMaster, executive vice president of Yokohama's business division.

Yokohama is the latest tire company to announce the need for price increases. Toyo Tire U.S.A. Corp., Goodyear Tire & Rubber Co, Continental Tire North

America Inc., Michelin North America Inc., Cooper Tire & Rubber Co., Falken Tire Corp., Federal Tire Corp. and Hankook Tire America Corp. also have announced price increases since April 30.

Do consumers care about rolling resistance?

May 29, 2008

With regular unleaded gasoline hovering around \$4 per gallon, local TV stations are airing ways for consumers to get better fuel mileage, including maintaining proper air pressure in their tires.

Newspapers are getting in on the act, too. *USA Today* ran a story for Memorial Day that focused on new tires that offer low rolling resistance. The article touted the fuel saving benefits of these products. But do tire buyers care about rolling resistance?

This past December, before the latest rise in gas prices, *moderntiredealer.com's* monthly Web poll asked tire dealers, "Do your retail customers care about low rolling resistance?" Only 14% of respondents said "Yes." Fifty eight percent of respondents said "No," while 28% said, "Yes, but it doesn't trump low price."

Fast forward to this month's Web poll. The same question was asked. This time around, 59% of respondents said "No." Meanwhile, a slightly higher percentage (16%) said "Yes," and 25% replied, "Yes, but it doesn't trump low price." Responding to the on-line version of the *USA Today* article, a number of consumers made interesting -- and in some cases, humorous -- comments about low rolling resistance tires. One reader remarked, "We landed on the moon... seems we could build an efficient tire!" Another said, "It seems to me if you made these tires square, you couldn't get anywhere -- thus saving untold amounts of gas!" followed by "You engineers can take over from here!"

"Low resistance tires? What happens when you put on your brakes?" asked another. Meanwhile, tire manufacturers continue to make significant investments in bids to boost the fuel efficiency of their consumer tires. For example, earlier this year, Michelin North America Inc. announced it's investing nearly \$7 million into research and development efforts to improve fuel economy by reducing rolling resistance.



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This year's winners are below:



Ashli Matherne a graduate of Hahnville High School in Boutte, LA, is the daughter of Troy and Frances Matherne. Ashli was nominated by member company CARQUEST Auto. Ashli was awarded the \$1,400.00 scholarship by the Louisiana Independent Tire Dealers Association, for her outstanding G.P.A. of a 3.6 and her constant involvement in school activities.



Kacy Brown, a graduate of Pineville High School, is the daughter of James and Arlene Rhymes. Kacy was nominated by LITDA member company D&J Tire Inc. She was awarded the \$1,400 scholarship by the Louisiana Independent Tire dealers Association. She received the honor in recognition for her overall cumulative GPA, involvement in school activities, and continuous involvement with community service.



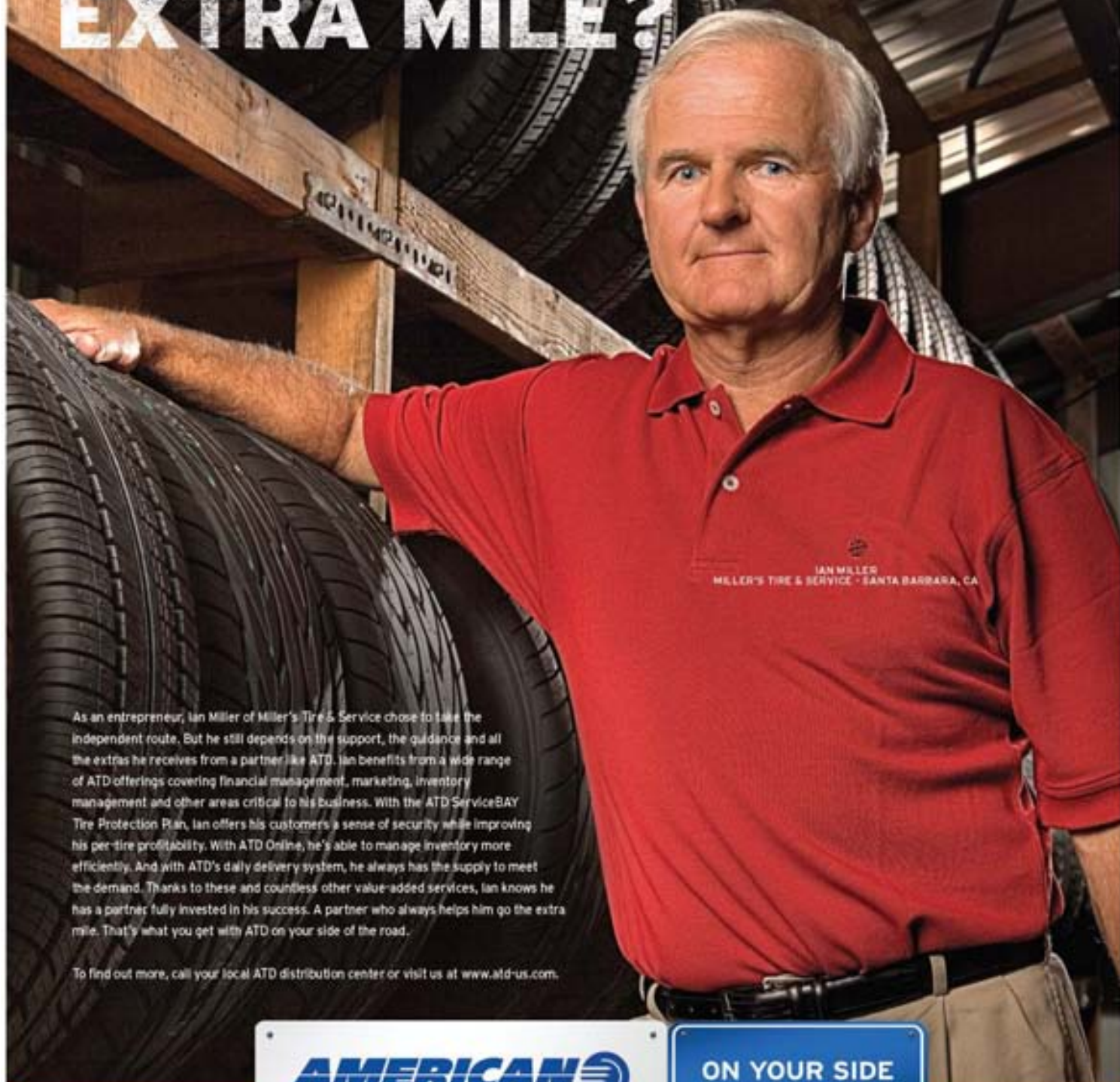
Ann-Marie Zito, a senior at St. John High School, is the daughter of Andrew Zito's who owns Z-Best Tire in Plaquemine, LA. Ann Marie was awarded the \$1,400 scholarship from the Louisiana Independent Tire Dealers Association for her overall G.P.A of a 3.85, her continuous involvement in school programs, and her proven leadership skills.



Dustin Carter a graduate of Marksville High School in Marksville, LA, is the son of Robert and Linda Daigrepoint. Dustin is currently employed at Despino's Tire Service, where he will work while he attends the Louisiana College in Pineville, LA. Dustin was awarded the \$1,400.00 scholarship by the Louisiana Independent Tire Dealers Association for his outstanding G.P.A. of a 3.88 and his continuous involvement in school activities.

CONGRATULATIONS & GOOD LUCK IN THE FUTURE!

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IAN MILLER
MILLER'S TIRE & SERVICE - SANTA BARBARA, CA

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Servicing Aluminum Wheels

By: Glenn Kinyon, Tire Industry Association, May / June 2008

I arrived at a jobsite recently to discover that the vehicle on which I was to install a new set of tires was a customized (designed to haul motorcycles) moving van – an artistic and fresh-looking paint job and logo adorning its bulkheads, with brightly-polished aluminum wheels providing ornamentation below decks. The scene before me suggested I would be working on a relatively new unit, so I was surprised to learn that this clean, perky trailer was resting on such an ancient configuration as stud-piloted wheels. I had already attached the hub-pilot socket to my impact wrench, and now, head down and mumbling to myself, I returned to my truck for the correct tool.

Aluminum wheels are part and parcel of commercial tire service; and, although it rolls down the highway of ancient history, some years will likely pass yet before the stud-piloted wheel design flips on the turn signal and takes the exit ramp to extinction. While the aluminum studpiloted wheel is more unusual nowadays in service than its steel counterpart, it is not so unusual that we can comfortably neglect it in any discussion of aluminum wheels. Neither should we neglect it when stocking the service truck; when I came upon that fancy motorcycle-hauler, I was glad, as it turned out, that I still had an assortment of inner lug nuts handy. An aluminum wheel weighs in around 47 lbs; the steel brand, about 82 lbs. If we had two eighteen-wheel tractortrailer rigs, identical in all respects except that one was equipped with aluminum wheels and the other with steel, the aluminum-clad rig would weigh 630 lbs less than its counterpart, meaning that a maxed out rig could legally haul more product. This characteristic of lighter weight, combined with an attractive appearance, accounts for the popularity of aluminum wheels among trucking companies and truck drivers. Though it is not well known, aluminum wheels are also more than five times as strong as their steel brethren. But drawbacks accompany all choices and the advent of the aluminum wheel offered no exception to that maxim. The advent of the hubpiloted wheel design, went a long way toward alleviating those drawbacks.

After aluminum truck wheels were introduced to the market, the main drawback lied in the mechanics of aftermarket refitting. At that time, most, if not all, disc wheels were of the stud-piloted variety, and, as aluminum wheels were thicker in bolthole width, a longer inner nut was necessary to extend far enough past the outer wheel to engage the outer nut. The wheel manufacturer saw to the provision of this inner nut, which they also designed with a shoulder that extended through the bolt-hole of the inner aluminum wheel to support it on the stud; but the existing wheel studs, designed to accommodate the shorter inner nut and thinner disc face, were far short of the 1-5/16-inch stud standout needed to support the longer inner nut internally.

When these new inner nuts were later removed during tire service, they tended to break, snapping off at the end of the stud. The introduction of the tool to remove a broken inner nut was years behind the problem, and in the meantime, the service tech was reduced to the employment of air chisels, pipe wrenches, cutting torches, or whatever it took to remove the broken fastener. The manufacturer later installed a steel plug inside the nut to fill the hollow space, which eased the problem to an extent, but, as it turned out, until truck and trailer manufacturers began fitting their vehicles with a universal stud, the proper way to switch a truck from steel to aluminum wheels involved replacing all the original wheel studs with those of proper length, though few vehicle owners were inclined to go to such expense, opting instead to ignore the potential consequences.

Another problem, and one with often serious consequences, arose when truck owners decided to install the pretty aluminum wheels on the outer position only,

thus enjoying the benefit of appearances at half the cost of a full set of wheels. This required the design of another inner nut if such refitting were not to result in wheel-offs. This nut came without the aluminum wheel style shoulder so it could safely secure a steel inner wheel while it was long enough to extend through an aluminum outer wheel. The problem lied in that many truck owners and many techs were unaware of the need to replace the original steel-wheel inner nuts. This left too few of the short inner nut's threads exposed to engage the outer nut properly, and in time, with the problem hidden beneath a set of chrome nut covers, the outer wheels would work their way off the truck. Also, when different metals (steel and aluminum in this case) come in contact for extended service, corrosion will ensue at an accelerated rate. It is important to place a specially-designed separator between two such wheels.

One of the most danger-fraught situations in which service techs were often involved (we speak in the past tense here but these things can still happen in certain quarters) was the swapping of steel stud-piloted wheels from one truck with the aluminum wheels of another – a common occurrence at the truck sales lot. The trade-in vehicle, or the one receiving the steel wheels, would be equipped The collar on the bottom of the nut helps support the wheel so it can be properly centered on the stud. with the long wheel studs. An inexperienced tech might try to force the short inner nuts over the long studs, which would result in smashed stud-ends and loose wheels.

Another consideration with studpiloted aluminum wheels was the need for even another design of cap nut to accommodate super single rear wheels or trucks with 3/4-inch studs on the steer axles. This was basically an outer nut with a shoulder to one side. Most of these problems went away with the introduction of the hub-piloted wheel system. The inner nut was eliminated and the same fastener could now be used interchangeably between steel and aluminum wheels, as well as between drive, steer, and trailer axles. A couple of other problems arose, one of which involved the corrosion between the aluminum of the wheel and the steel of the hub. In a relatively short amount of time, the wheel would seize to the hub, and service personnel were forced to take drastic measures to separate one component from the other. Eventually, the manufacturer designed the aluminum wheel with a groove around the center-hole, which decreased the contact area between the two metals, rendering the wheel less likely to seize up. While this did not eliminate the problem entirely, it did have a positive effect as such a wheel can be freed with much less effort.

Though another problem has more to do with the difference between wheel systems than with the materials of which they are made, it might not hurt to make mention of it. It has to do with basic ignorance on the part of those who provide the service. A-stud-piloted wheel with its larger bolt-holes and centerhole will physically slide onto the end of a hub-pilot style axle. Here, we are inclined to use the term "ignorance" in the pejorative sense. If the service "tech" is inexperienced to such a degree as to assume interchangeability between the two wheel systems, the individual in charge of him must be a stupid, stupid person. But our own eyes tell us that such things take place. Also, it must be taken into account that the proper installation of the hub-piloted aluminum wheel requires a pilot pad with sufficient length to support its additional thickness. The pilot pad must be long enough to extend at least halfway through the center-hole of the wheel, which was not the case on earlier truck models with the new wheel system.

When installing new aluminum heels, the tech should be aware of he replacement wheel's polished surface. *Continued on page 11*

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It is a common occurrence that the wrong wheels are either ordered or shipped, and if a polished outside heel is installed on a drive axle, or a polished inside heel on the steer axle, the product will be rendered unreturnable, salvageable only as an inside heel sold for less than its cost.

In the meantime, someone will have to come up with the price of a new one. The aluminum truck wheel spawned a number of related inventions. The straight-end air chuck and the straight-end air gauge were designed for aluminum wheel service in order to accommodate the small hand-holes round the valve stems. Rubber inserts made to fit into the hand-holes of the outer wheel to support a valve extension from the

inner position became available. The steel-to-aluminum heel separator was another product that solved a problem. Plastic wheel guards and special sockets protect the polished surfaces from socket damage. Baby moons, chrome hubcaps and nut covers all accompanied the aluminum wheel onto the market. The fancy nut cover pullers came later. Nut covers come in every conceivable design, and their removal and installation alone might double the time it takes to replace a tire. With all the advantages the aluminum wheel can boast over those of its steel cousin, they are certainly here to stay. Servicing them sometimes requires some patience as well as a gentle touch; but, happily, it is not as difficult as it used to be.

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When I walk into a retread plant these days, I see one thing that is a good sign and a bad sign at the same time. I see more tires than normal being repaired which is a good sign for retreaders, but it may be a bad sign for the total economy. Even with more companies taking advantage of repairing and retreading tires, it is not overcoming the total slowdown in the economy. Total new tire and retread sales are down and accounts receivable are becoming a major concern for many dealers and I fear it will become more of a problem in the near future. I

know that this is the time of year that we normally slow down, but I think we have to be a little extra careful considering fuel prices and the unsettled economy.

When you are in the tire business, it is not difficult to realize the problems we are faced with today. But

unfortunately, many dealers will be slow to respond to the problems and fail to make timely adjustments to their operations. I can speak from experience as to failing to take timely corrective action to deal with a problem that just gets worse with time. As a manager, you can get so busy with other issues that it is easy to let problems slide thinking that time will improve the problem. How many of us have had a store or plant losing money and yet we kept pumping money and time into it until we finally realized that we do not have the right personnel, the right location, the right product, or the right timing to make it work so we close the operation?

I do not like to talk about doom and gloom, but there are some important things that dealers and retreaders need to evaluate and change to reduce their costs. If possible, all overtime should be eliminated and it may be necessary to transfer workers to different jobs to adjust for a slow down in the number of tires coming in for retread or repair, or a drop in the number of service calls. Some of you use outside vendors for maintenance and janitorial work so it may be time to see if some of your full-time workers can do some of it or can be trained to do it. It does not take a lot of skill to mow grass, paint, or sweep floors. This would hopefully keep good workers in the workforce until the economy improves. I have been in a few shops lately that have finished all their tires by one or two o'clock in the afternoon. If this happens to you, it is a good time to catch up on maintenance and there is always maintenance to be done. It may also be a good time to put up some shelves to help organize hand tools and other small items that are used regularly.

Most plants usually have rubber that needs to be cleaned up, inventoried, and boxed to keep it clean. If you have route trucks that have been coming in with very few tires during the slow down, it may be a good time to start calling all your route customers and try to schedule pick-up for every other week and possibly ship some by common carrier until business picks up. In many cases, it may be possible to supply some of your customers with stock tires if you have them.

More and more truck fleets are working on incentive plans to increase fuel mileage on their trucks. One simple thing that can help is to turn truck engines off instead of idling. This is hard to do, but you may need to implement a surcharge for fuel when making deliveries. You can bet that you are paying surcharges on many of the items you receive. Most people refuse to increase the prices they charge for retreading and repairing, especially when business is slow, but how else are you going to recover the increases in raw materials and supplies?



New tires and rubber prices have continually increased over the last twelve months and it is a given that they will continue to increase.

The price of pre-cure rubber has more than doubled in the last nine

years and diesel fuel has increased from \$1.00 per gallon to over \$4.00 per gallon since 1999. If diesel stays around \$4.00 per gallon, and I am sure it will, you can rest assured that everything we use is going to cost more. Even with the economy slowing down and prices increasing, it does not mean there are no opportunities. Interest rates are very low, so if you are in a position where you need to build or move into a new market, this may be the time to do it.

With a slow down in business, you may have more time on your hands for you and your work force to develop new marketing programs or work on new ideas and projects or to call on potential customers. Fleets that have not been interested in your product or services may feel different because of cost increases they have experienced, so they may develop into a good customer. People tend to listen much more closely to the possibility of saving by using retreading and repairing to reduce their tire costs, especially when they find that high fuel and other costs have made their operations unprofitable.

Do not let the slow down get you down; just make timely adjustments in your business operations. Spring is here and it is time for you to promote the savings that are possible to your customers through their use of quality retreads and repairs.

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Bring Value to Your Product

By Mary Sikora, Tire Industry Association, May / June 2008

One of the highlights of the Tire and Rubber Recycling Advisory Council's (TRRAC) 2008 tire recycling program was the playground and sports surfaces product testing demonstration. TRRAC member Denise Kennedy, coordinated the program that centered on providing product testing services for many different types of rubber product materials including loose fill rubber, pour-in-place and artificial sports turf surfacing. Testing was conducted by Tom Whittier, General Manager of Facilities; Steve Scaturro, Installation Coordinator for Totturf by Robertson Industries, Inc.; Rolf Huber, President, Playground Clearinghouse; and Erle Miles, President Testing Services, Inc. (TSI). Miles demonstrated how to use the TRIAX 2000 and "A" missile testing equipment in the field prior to sending the material to a testing lab for official certification. The TRIAX 2000 is used to test for impact attenuation of recycled rubber surfaces and the "A" missile is an artificial turf impact tester which can be used to test football, soccer, baseball, and multi-purpose fields.

The demonstration, which was designed for companies involved in the production, installation and/or marketing of playground surfacing products utilizing recycled rubber, focused on a range of issues related to meeting safety and environmental standards for these surfaces. "In the past, there were very few safety regulations for playground or athletic field surfaces," Miles said. "Rubber testing was minimal and recycled rubber had yet to make its mark in synthetic fields."

"But that was then," Miles told the assembled tire recycling industry professionals. Today, not only are more recycled materials used but because many of these products are being used in both public and residential applications, stricter safety regulations are being implemented. These include ASTM F1292-04 standard specification which establishes minimum performance requirements for the impact attenuation of playground surfacing materials installed within the Use Zone of Playground Equipment. ASTM F1951 defines the standard specifications for playground surface accessibility that meet ADA (Americans with Disabilities Act) approval. "At TSI we don't make 'um, we just test 'um," Miles said. "We're just one link in the chain. Meeting these standards involves building relationships with raw material suppliers, installers, repair and maintenance technicians," he said.

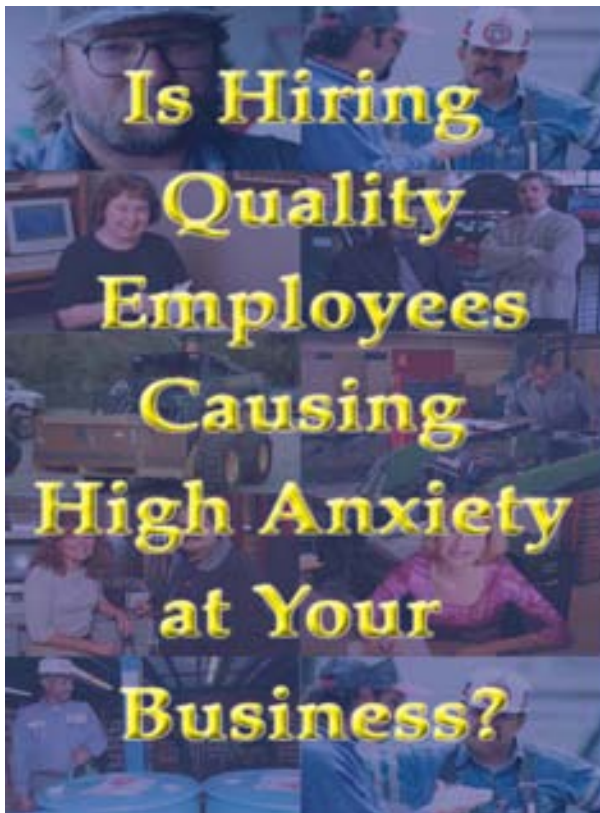
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"Material selection mix is key to putting down a surface that will meet safety and environmental standards," Tom Whittier of Totturf told the audience. "That means you need to get to know your supplier. Whether you're going to install an artificial turf field, rubber drains, poured-in place mats, loose-fill mulch or rubber side-walks, you need to know what kind and level of quality control/quality assurance practices your supplier maintains in their manufacturing process and throughout their operation. Visiting a supplier's facility can help you assess product consistency and determine the plant's supply capabilities."

"These are all factors that influence the quality of the surface you install and help determine their ability to meet the required health and environmental standards," Whittier said. Other influences that affect surfacing material performance include aging, moisture, maintenance, compaction, loss of thickness, shrinkage and submersion in water, according to Totturf Installation Coordinator Steve Scaturro. Because of these factors, product suppliers and installers need to assure that proper repair and resurfacing options and maintenance training programs are available.

By creating a safe environment with good quality assurance and quality control measurements and knowing how your recycled rubber surfacing products measure up to ASTM and ADA standards, raw material suppliers, product manufacturers, installers, maintenance personnel, and testing labs all communicate a high degree of confidence in the product which, in turn, encourages consumers to buy and use recycled rubber materials for playground and athletic field surfaces, Whittier concluded.



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