

ALEX SALOMATOFF HAS THE ANSWERS TO YOUR BOAT QUESTIONS



Alex Salomatoff.

BE CAREFUL!



If you have a question for Master Mechanic and Owner of Alex's Marine Plus in New Windsor, NY, simply call Alex at 845.565.9199 or e-mail, AlexsMarine@aol.com

Here is information that can save your life while towing your boat.



10 Things you need to know about Boat Trailer Tires

A little knowledge will keep your boat on the trailer, and tires on the road

by **BoatUS Editors**

Tires aren't exciting, until something goes wrong. Then, tires become the Topic of the Day. Over the next few pages, BoatU.S. is going to take you on a boat-trailer tire tour, with some tire basics so that your tires will always be ... well, tiresome.

1. Trailer Made

A tire's sidewall is where you learn everything: dimensions, capacities, age, and most important, purpose. A tire made for a boat trailer is going to have "ST" on the sidewall, or the words "Trailer Use Only." Unlike tires on your car, trailer tires have strengthened sidewalls to handle the weight of a boat, especially when rounding corners.

Trailer tires are either bias ply or radial. Bias-ply sidewalls are stiffer, less expensive than radials, and are preferred if the trailer isn't used for long trips. If you take long trips, then radials are a better choice because there's reduced heat buildup as compared to bias ply, greater load capacity, and less road noise. Use all bias ply or all radials; never mix them.

2. Inflation

BoatU.S. Trailer Assist service providers say tires are the main reason they're called to help members experiencing trouble on the road. Under-inflation is the cause

of most tire trouble because temperatures increase when the tire pressure, measured in pounds per square inch (psi), is too low. So, check inflation prior to going on the road. Remember, boat trailer tires typically need to be inflated to higher psi than tow-vehicle tires. And be sure to also check the psi of the spare tire.

3. Load Range Every tire has a load range, and trailer tires are no different. Marked on the sidewall, the load range runs from the lightest weight the tire can carry (Load Range E) to the heaviest (Load Range A). Load range is a measure of an individual tire's maximum capacity to carry a boat and trailer. Most boat trailer tires have a Load Range of B, C, or D. If a tire has load range C, it can carry 1,820 pounds. If it's on a single-axle trailer, this means both tires can carry a total of 3,640 pounds, which includes the weight of the trailer, the boat, the engine, fuel, and anything else inside the boat. Single-axle trailers can carry 100 percent of the load rating. Double-axle trailers require the load be reduced by 12 percent. As load range increases, psi increases.

4. Tire Wear

Your tires will tell you when something's wrong and usually give plenty of hints before becoming the topic of conversation. This chart shows the usual causes of excessive wear on the tire tread:

5. Sidewall PIC DryRot2

Inspect the sidewalls for spiderweb cracks, which is evidence of dry rot (and imminent failure).

6. Tread PIC(treaddepth)

A Lincoln penny is a good measure for tread depth on both car and boat trailer tires. Place the penny upside down on the tread. If you can see the top of the president's head, the tread is worn and it's time to start looking for new tires.

7. Valve Stem

Often overlooked, the valve stem may be the cause of continued low psi. Press your finger against one side of the stem and listen for any loss of air.

8. Balance and Rotate Tires?

The answers are "yes" and "maybe." Like tires on your car or tow vehicle, trailer tires that are balanced ensure proper tire wear and reduce vibration. Single-axle boat-trailer tires usually don't need to be rotated. A tandem-axle trailer rotation isn't necessary unless you notice increased wear that's occurring faster than normal. In that case, rotate the tires from front to back, preferably in an "X" configuration.

9. If The Trailer Sits Outside

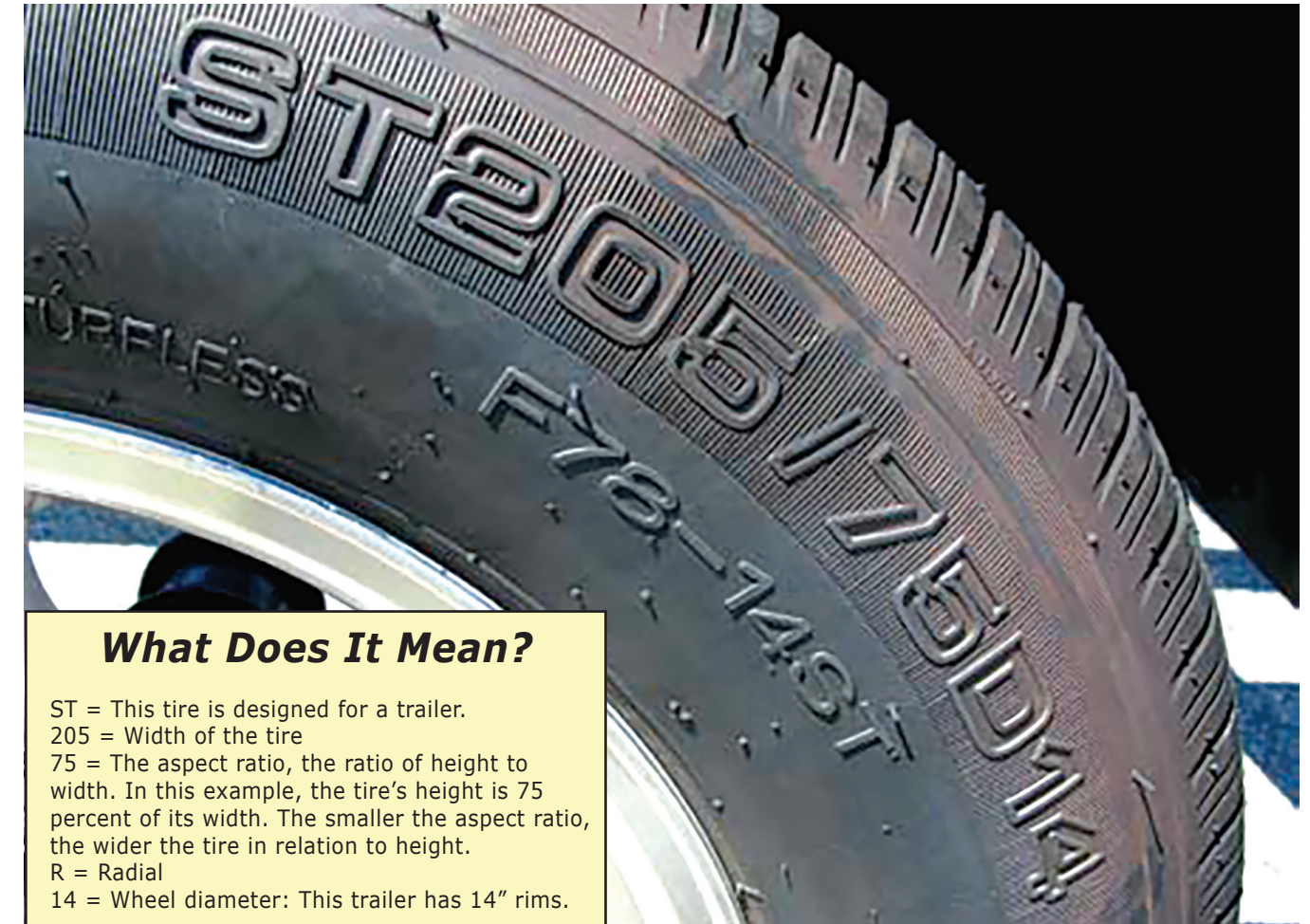
Trailer tires face a pair of threats outside: (A) Sun — prolonged exposure to the sun's UV rays will deteriorate trailer tires, causing spiderweb cracks. This can be easily resolved by putting tire covers over the tires if the trailer is going to be parked for an extended period of time. (B) Moisture — the worst thing you can do to a trailer tire is to park it on grass for a long period of time where moisture is going to slowly get into the tire's protective surface. This can be solved by either removing the tires during the winter (also deters theft) or positioning the trailer tires on concrete or plywood.

10. Motion Is Good

A parked trailer means the tires are bearing the weight in the same position on the tire for a long period of time. This can result in "flat spots" on a

HOW OLD R U?

Your tire's age (whether for a boat trailer, truck, or passenger car) has a DOT (Department of Transportation) designation that provides the tire's date of manufacture. The last four digits tell you everything you need to know. In this case, the tire was created during the 12th week (12) of the year 2000 (00). Some manufacturers, like KendaUSA, makers of Loadstar tires, use both sides of the tire for DOT information; one side will have a code indicating where the tire was manufactured and the other side will have the four DOT numbers.



What Does It Mean?

ST = This tire is designed for a trailer.
205 = Width of the tire
75 = The aspect ratio, the ratio of height to width. In this example, the tire's height is 75 percent of its width. The smaller the aspect ratio, the wider the tire in relation to height.
R = Radial
14 = Wheel diameter: This trailer has 14" rims.



A Tire Pressure Monitoring System

After all the noise we've made about the importance of checking tire pressure, it can be done without getting out of your truck with a tire gauge. A number of monitoring systems are available for recreational vehicle owners but here's one designed with a trailer boat owner in mind. The 507RV made by Truck System Technologies (www.tsttruck.com) is part of a larger system already in use on semi-trucks throughout the country (Freightliner, MHC Kenworth to name a few). It's simple to set up: a monitor is screwed into the tire stem and a screen is plugged into the tow vehicle cigarette lighter and, once programmed, will provide the PSI of each tire as well as the temperature inside the tire, (the latter being important to warn if a bearing or brake rotor is going bad). It works when trailers are dunked in freshwater or saltwater too.

