

## Taking safety to the road

Tyre burst was implicated as a major contributor to road crashes in the Easter 2019 period, showing an increase of 18% compared to Easter 2018 according to the Preliminary Easter 2019 Road Safety Report.



While various factors may result in a tyre bursting, such as structural damage, under-inflation, over-heating and travelling at above-recommended speeds, the sale and fitment of part-worn and damaged tyres is of major concern in this regard.

Reinforcing government's commitment to working with tyre manufacturing companies and vehicle manufacturers to heighten the focus on the illegal tyre industry, the then Minister of Transport, Blade Nzimande, in his preliminary report on the Easter 2019 period asserted that the best approach to achieving the objectives of reducing fatalities is by integrating safer roads, safer vehicles, more effective post-crash responses and sustained education and awareness campaigns.<sup>1</sup>

"The only part of a vehicle to touch the road surface is the tyres," says Riaz Haffejee, CEO of Sumitomo Rubber South Africa (Pty) Ltd.

"Responsible road usage includes ensuring that a vehicle's tyres are in optimal condition to ensure safe arrival at the end destination. With this in mind we have partnered with the Road Accident Fund (RAF) to bring training to traffic officers and other road safety service professionals across the country."

Provincial and municipal traffic officers have a pivotal part to play in the goal of reducing road accidents and deaths, working with members of the public to inform and encourage traffic rule compliance.

Sumitomo Rubber South Africa has thus taken the initiative to ensure that traffic officers and road safety personnel are well equipped to make tyre safety decisions, advise the public correctly and keep vehicles fitted with unsafe tyres off the road.

“The first training session for 2019 was held at the Pietermaritzburg RAF offices and was attended by 110 personnel from the South African Police Services, the RAF and Emergency Services. This was followed by sessions in Durban and Pretoria with a turnout of 80 personnel each,” says Haffejee.

“We had excellent engagement from participants. This was a wonderful opportunity, as a corporate citizen of good standing, for SRSA to give back to the service personnel and to road users.”

The training sessions include topics such as tyre safety, the construction of a tyre and the dangers of part worn and damaged tyres. A comprehensive explanation of tread wear depth indicators and tyre tread depth measuring provides valuable context for traffic officers who conduct tyre inspections.

“Safety is part of the DNA of Sumitomo Rubber South Africa. This extends into every aspect of our business from the factory floor, to ensuring that customers who buy our tyres are buying a #Saferthansafe tyre that will help keep them and their passengers safe, and providing valuable safety awareness and training to the public and traffic officers,” Haffejee says.

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