

Holiday safety 101: When tyres are compromised on your road trip

The last thing you want to think about when planning your December holiday is car trouble, when all that's probably on your mind is a fun year-end break. Nonetheless, it's best to keep road safety at the top of your priority list to ensure you have a great trip.

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A flat tyre or puncture are among the most common vehicle challenges motorists face while driving. Usually it's an easy fix but if you are holidaying away on the open road, knowing the basics of tyre safety and repair is helpful.

Any tyre, no matter how well constructed, could fail due to punctures, impact damage such as potholes, improper inflation, uneven wear due to misalignment, and overloading – which is especially common when travelling long distances.

As a rule, ensuring your vehicle passes a general safety check including brakes, suspension, tyres and visibility is as critical as confirming your holiday accommodation ahead of your road trip.

As one of South Africa's largest tyre manufacturing companies, Sumitomo Rubber South Africa, manufacturer of the iconic Dunlop tyre brand, is advising South Africans to be #SaferThanSafe and boost tyre, vehicle and road safety this holiday.

CEO Lubin Ozoux, says: "All tyres will eventually wear out. A worn or damaged tyre can present a safety hazard, and a tyre failure can lead to an accident that may result in property damage, personal injuries or even death.

"Dunlop promotes safety first, so we recommend getting your tyres checked ahead of any planned trips. A check at our tyre dealerships is quick and free, or you can do it yourself if you know what to look out for. Have your spare tyre checked to ensure it is in working order and that your tyre-changing equipment is functional. A reputable tyre dealership or fitment centre should be able to advise you on correct tyre pressure and inflation, tread wear and depth and any tyre repair or replacement options to do before you hit the road on that trip," he advises.

As a major tyre producer, Sumitomo Rubber South Africa is bound by global guidelines to determine whether a puncture is safe to repair. This is critical as the incorrect repair of tyres could cost lives. The tyre must be removed from the rim, be

closely analysed to correctly assess and repair a puncture.

What do you do if you do run into tyre trouble on your summer vacation?

Often, a simple object such as a nail in the tread can result in severe damage to the sidewall that cannot be seen on the outside of the tyre. Therefore, on-the-wheel repairs like string plugs – which consist of a long-woven cord that is covered in a tacky substance – are not recommended and must be considered temporary.

If your advisor says the tyre can be safely repaired, the only method that should be used is a mushroom plug applied from inside of the tyre which is a combination of a plug and patch:

- The tyre's inner liner must be buffed and prepared.
- The area of the puncture through the tyre must be cleaned.
- The plug has to be completely pulled through filling the path of the puncture.
- The air integrity is safeguarded by cementing and coating the patch.
- The tyre must now be re-fitted to the wheel, inflated and water tested.
- The wheel is balanced to accommodate redistributed weight caused by the repair.

If you were advised that you can repair the tyre, you have a couple of criteria to consider. For quick, short-term repairs, a plug would be the best option, but this should not be completed in less than 15 minutes unless all the above protocols were followed by a responsible tyre dealer.

Do remember that tyre plugs are mostly designed to get you from point A to point B, usually to the auto shop. When on a road trip off the beaten track it would be safest to get a new tyre as soon as possible, as these types of repairs are supposed to repair minor damage to otherwise perfectly acceptable tyres.

If you continue to drive on a tyre that has a faulty patch or plug, you can represent a major safety hazard and be at risk of a blow-out, which is the worst-case scenario when holidaying away from the city.

Remember, damage to your tyres sidewall is dangerous and should not be “repaired” in any event as it is a life-threatening safety oversight. If you find yourself in need of new tyres after exhausting all repair options en route this summer holiday, contact your nearest Dunlop fitment centre before you return to take on the road.

Visit www.dunloptyres.co.za to kickstart your summer escape and find loads of road trip ideas with Dunlop's [#TheBigDrive](#) summer year-end promotion. From 22 November to 31 December 2021, customers who buy any four Dunlop passenger car, SUV, 4x4 or light truck tyres will receive a free pair of compact binoculars and discounted bookings with SANParks and Ezemvelo KZN Wildlife.

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