

# What else do I need to know about using winter tyres safely?

- Only use winter tyres where and when they are required. This means fitting conventional all-season or summer tyres when the weather warms up. A convenient way to achieve this is to have two sets of wheels for the car, one fitted with winter tyres and the other with conventional tyres.
- Winter tyres provide better grip than the traditional summer tyres in ice, snow and cold weather, but will provide less grip than summer tyres in non-wintery conditions.
- Never mix winter tyres with other tyres. Tests have shown that, if winter tyres are mixed with summer tyres on the same vehicle, the different degrees of grip can make the vehicle unbalanced and difficult to control in an emergency or during hard braking.
- Beware of older 'new' or used winter tyres. The soft rubber tread compound can harden as a result of a number of conditions, particularly with age, resulting in less grip and making the tyres dangerous to use. Many vehicle manufacturers recommend that any tyres older than seven years should not be used on the road.

## Further information

If you have any questions about the safety or suitability of the tyres on your vehicle, visit your local tyre retailer and ask for advice - many offer free safety checks.

You may also like to check the tyre manufacturer's website for more detailed information on a specific winter tyre.

For more information about the legal requirements for winter tyres, please refer to [www.nzta.govt.nz/resources/rules/tyres-and-wheels-2001-index.html](http://www.nzta.govt.nz/resources/rules/tyres-and-wheels-2001-index.html), or phone 0800 699 000.

## Our contact details

For general enquiries and contact information for the NZ Transport Agency please check our website [www.nzta.govt.nz](http://www.nzta.govt.nz) or email us at [info@nzta.govt.nz](mailto:info@nzta.govt.nz)

**NATIONAL OFFICE**  
Victoria Arcade,  
44 Victoria Street  
Private Bag 6995,  
Wellington 6141  
New Zealand  
Telephone: +64 4 894 5400  
Fax: +64 4 894 6100

**TRANSPORT  
REGISTRY CENTRE**  
Private Bag 11777,  
Palmerston North 4412  
New Zealand  
Telephone: 0800 108 809  
(motor vehicle registrations)  
Telephone: 0800 822 422  
(driver licensing)  
Fax: +64 6 953 6406

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# Winter tyres

Do you know the legal requirements for winter tyres?

If you have winter tyres fitted to your vehicle, make sure you are up to date with the new legal requirements that are in force from 1 April 2010.



## What are winter tyres?

Winter tyres, also known as snow tyres, are made with a softer rubber compound and deeper treads specifically designed to maintain grip in wintry conditions, ie cold weather (below 7°C), ice and snow.

## Do people need winter tyres in New Zealand?

The vast majority of New Zealand motorists don't need winter tyres on their vehicles. Winter tyres may be appropriate for a very small number of motorists who regularly drive in wintry alpine conditions, but they should be changed to conventional tyres at the end of winter. All-season tyres may be a suitable option for those who occasionally need to drive in wintry conditions, with the advantage that they can be left on the vehicle all year round.

Ask your local tyre retailer about the tyres most suitable for your needs.

## How can I identify a winter tyre?

Winter tyres have a distinctive tread pattern. It consists of deep square-patterned tread blocks that have small zig-zag grooves called sipes that allow the blocks to flex to maintain grip.



In addition to the distinctive tread pattern, winter tyres usually have one or both of the following markings:

- a snowflake and mountain symbol marked on the side wall of the tyre
- the word STUDLESS on the side wall of the tyre.



## What about tyres marked with 'M+S'?

Tyres marked with 'M+S' on the side wall are usually all-season 'mud and snow' tyres, which are designed to perform in a wide range of summer and winter conditions. Winter tyres often have the 'M+S' marking in addition to the above markings, but tyres marked with 'M+S' only are all-season tyres.

You should ask a tyre retailer if you are not sure if the tyres on your vehicle are winter tyres.

## What legal requirements do my winter tyres have to meet?

Winter tyres can be dangerous if they are not fitted or maintained correctly. Therefore, you need to make sure that the following two requirements are met:

- If you need winter tyres on your vehicle, they must be fitted on all road wheels.
- Winter tyres must have a tread depth of at least 4mm in the grooves of the tyre that usually contains tread depth indicators (as circled in the picture below).



If a vehicle fitted with winter tyres is presented for a warrant of fitness or certificate of fitness inspection and does not meet these two requirements, the vehicle will fail its inspection.