

Tyre Safety Campaign aims to drive out Scotland's illegal dealers

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Drivers buying second hand tyres are being warned to check that they are legal and have passed the relevant safety checks.

So-called 'part worn' tyres are legal to sell in the UK – provided they meet a minimum tread depth of 2mm, have passed a range of safety checks, are clearly and permanently stamped and have paperwork verifying their origin and safety. Part worn tyres come into the UK from other countries including Germany, where there is minimum winter tread depth of 4mm.

The Scottish Environment Protection Agency (SEPA), Police Scotland, North Lanarkshire Council, South Lanarkshire Council, Renfrewshire Council and UK tyre safety charity, TyreSafe, are launching a campaign to crack down on potentially unsafe waste tyres being sold illegally as part worn tyres.

Kath McDowall, Unit Manager in SEPA's Waste Crime Investigations Team, explained: "Selling waste tyres as part worn tyres isn't just a crime, but putting an untested waste tyre on a vehicle can be dangerous. SEPA is Scotland's Environmental regulator and we are responsible for ensuring that waste is not dumped illegally or used inappropriately. We are clear that compliance is not negotiable."

Criminal activity in the tyre sector ranges from small scale fly tipping to large scale illegal dumping of waste tyres, with the clean-up costs for both falling to public bodies and landowners. Previous multi-agency raids have revealed a direct connection with some part worn proprietors and organised crime, which increased the probability of unlicensed disposal and environmental damage.

"We want people to be aware when they buy a part worn tyre that it should have gone through a rigorous safety inspection process and should have a stamp or paperwork verifying its origin," McDowall says. "Rather than taking the dealers' word for it, consumers need to do their own visual inspection. Your checks should include that the tyre doesn't have nails, bumps or gashes in it, that it's fully inflated and that the grooves of the tread are still clearly visible and at least 2mm deep."

A key element of the new sector plan for the tyre industry, SEPA wants to ensure that waste is being recycled and disposed of responsibly and not being reused unsuitably, or in a way that results in a danger to road users and pedestrians alike.

Sergeant Susan Rae, Police Scotland said: "Defective tyres can contribute to serious road crashes, potentially leading to a loss of life. Emergency services witness first-hand the immediate devastation following a road crash

and the impact it has on families who lose loved ones. When you buy part worn tyres, you are responsible for ensuring they meet legal standards. Our message is – do not compromise and make sure your tyres are legal. Your safety and the safety of other road users depends on it.

“We are aware that this can also be an area where serious and organised crime gangs seek to operate. They are only interested in making money and don’t care if the product they are selling, on this occasion, part worn tyres are legal or safe. They don’t care if you or your family is at risk, all they want is to see their profits grow.”

TyreSafe has investigated 220 part worn dealers over the last five years in partnership with Trading Standards and found 94% were supplying tyres illegally. Equally concerning, 65% of the 441 tyres inspected were found to be unsafe to return to the road network.

TyreSafe chairman, Stuart Jackson, said: “Each year in the UK, more than 1000 road casualties are caused by an incident where illegal, defective or under-inflated tyres are a contributory factor. To maximise road safety and prolong tyre life, a tyre’s pressure, tread depth and general condition should be checked regularly.

“When replacing tyres, fitting new tyres is the safest option. However, legislation does exist which permits the sale of part worn tyres, subject to them meeting a number of criteria. The sale of part worn tyres that do not meet these legal requirements is not only a criminal offence under the Consumer Protection Act, but also poses a serious safety risk to drivers, their passengers and other road users.”

Paul Bannister, North Lanarkshire Council’s Protective Services Manager, said: “The Motor Vehicle Tyres (Safety) Regulations 1994 set out minimum safety standards for the supply of part-worn tyres, and buyers should be aware of these. Under the Regulations, it is illegal to supply any part-worn tyre that is capable of being fitted to a motor vehicle or trailer unless certain conditions are met regarding specific markings and the general safe condition of the tyre. The Trading Standards service will work with relevant partners to ensure that unsafe tyres are not being offered for supply within North Lanarkshire, and will take robust enforcement action those found to be placing consumers in danger.”

Councillor John Anderson, Chair of Community and Enterprise Resources, South Lanarkshire Council, said: “We can never compromise on safety, particularly in an area like tyre safety, where failure could have catastrophic results. Dangerous and non-compliant tyres are very commonly sold by part worn retailers to unsuspecting motorists, so it’s vital that we are proactive in tackling this issue. Dealers are operating illegally if they don’t have a licence to sell part worn tyres, if they’re selling unsafe tyres or if they’re stockpiling waste tyres without a waste management licence.”

Councillor Marie McGurk, Convener of Renfrewshire Council’s Communities, Housing and Planning Policy Board, said: “It is extremely important that we do not take risks when it comes to safety, as those extra few pounds in your

pocket are not worth putting yourself, your passengers or other road users in danger.

“Don’t take the person’s word for it that the tyres you are purchasing are legal, make your own visual checks and ask for evidence of the safety inspections having taken place.

“If you’re still not sure, then seek the advice of the Trading Standards team in Renfrewshire who can provide support and guidance, as well as assisting you to report any concerns.”

The multi-agency campaign will involve site visits to tyre dealers across North and South Lanarkshire and Renfrewshire to check for:

- Trading Standards breaches related to selling unsafe tyres
- Licence breaches related to second hand dealer and waste management licensing
- Other criminal activity

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NOTES TO EDITOR

Waste tyres

Scotland’s registered 2.9 million vehicles generate more than 4.2 million used tyres a year. As part of its [sector plan](#) for the tyre sector, SEPA is working with the industry to develop innovative ways to recycle and recover value from waste tyres. Examples include waste tyres being used as a feed stock for energy or as a fuel source for cement production. Crumbed rubber tyres also have a variety of uses including the creation of football pitches, horse arenas and the manufacture of noise/vibration attenuation mats.

Around 17% of the waste tyres generated annually are re-used as part worn or re-tread tyres. The disposal of whole or shredded tyres in landfills was banned in 2006.

Since then, the re-use, recycling and recovery of waste tyres have become common practice.

In 2017, there were 15 known stockpiles of illegally dumped tyres in Scotland, equating to over one million tyres that had been abandoned. This does not include small fly tipped piles or waste tyres stored at licensed facilities in contravention of licence conditions.

The Law on Part Worn Tyres

Under The Motor Vehicle Tyres (Safety) Regulations 1994 (reg.7.), part of the Consumer Protection Act, it is an offence for anyone to sell part worn tyres that do not meet the following principal requirements:

- The structural integrity must not be compromised. It should be free of large cuts, any bulges or lumps both internally and externally. No plies or cords should be exposed.
- Tyres must have passed an inflation test prior to sale.
- The original grooves must still be clearly visible in their entirety and must be to a depth of at least 2mm across the full breadth of the tread, around its entire circumference.
- Part worn tyres which have not been retreaded must clearly show the relevant 'E' mark alongside which 'PART-WORN' must be permanently and legibly applied in letters at least 4mm high. These words cannot be hot branded or cut into the tyre.
- Part-worn tyres that have been retreaded must have one of the following:
 - BS AU 144b, 144c, 144d, or 144e markings on the side wall (if first supplied as a retread on or before 31 December 2003 an ECE approval mark (if first supplied as a retread on or after 1 January 2004)
 - A permanent mark to identify the original model and manufacturer, the word 'RETREAD' moulded onto or into its sidewall (in upper case letters at least 4mm high) and further markings in accordance with ECE rules. You may need to seek further advice as to which rules apply
 - The indication 'PART WORN' must also appear next to the BS or ECE approval mark, or next to the word 'RETREAD'
 - For tyres marked BS AU 144e, a speed category symbol and load capacity marking should be present.
- A tyre has to comply with all these requirements whether or not it is fitted to a rim.