

"You need to look deeper than replacing tyres just according to what your driver says"

Chris Bull

RUBBER ASSETS

With premium tyre manufacturers introducing new product generations boasting novel materials, longer life and 'intelligent' treads – as well as new sizes (notably 315/70 R22.5) – it's tempting to turn off. But the fact is these organisations spend significant R&D dollars selecting, trialling and proving new concepts specifically to hit the right buttons. And, whether you think of them as assets or consumables, those are all about cutting costs.

So parameters such as tyre life, rolling resistance (fuel saving) and damage mitigation do matter. That said, however, there are other factors, without which even the smartest tyres are unlikely fully to deliver. Poor alignment and tracking, for example, but also lax tyre pressure maintenance are among them.

But another aspect concerns tyre husbandry – which should be straightforward, but rarely is, mostly because trucks and trailers move about. Doing this well not only delivers savings of its own, but also opens doors to making more sophisticated (and expensive) tyre choice pay – as Ryder's experience, under operations manager Chris Bull (above), clearly demonstrates.

Ryder reports an 11% reduction in tyre replacements, 29% in tyre-related downtime and emergency calls down

With ongoing claims of reduced tyre and fuel costs for the latest tyre generations, Brian Tinham reviews the role of tyre husbandry

46% since it started working proactively with Bridgestone, its dealer partners and its own workshops to raise standards, cut tyre waste and improve fleet uptime.

"Three years ago, managing tyres wasn't easy," concedes Bull. "We had good policies, but they were open to interpretation across our locations. So my mission back then was to ... drive a better, more consistent tyre strategy."

PEOPLE AND PASSION

Bull appointed seven tyre champions across the regions, with 'tyre responsible technicians' at the sites retrained on tyre management. Now, whenever tyres are removed, either at Ryder depots or on the road, they are inspected, and tread depth, condition and position noted, along with reasons for removal. The data is then assessed, actions agreed and, at a higher level, statistics compiled to ensure that all Ryder and Bridgestone technicians are on side.

But that's not all. "All technicians check tyres at our six-weekly inspections for legality, but also from a reliability perspective. So if they see uneven wear, for example, they'll turn them and check again next time," he explains. "We also have a fleet-wide 5%

tolerance strategy on tyre pressures."

For him, whichever tyres you buy, it's the way they're managed both at the micro and macro level that makes the difference. And that also entails ongoing dialogue with suppliers.

"We review our standards with Bridgestone every six months, but we also check performance every month. We'll examine hot spots – for example, where particular contracts are consuming more tyres. That means looking to see if there were warranty issues, whether replacements were the correct decision, whether some might have been repaired and reused."

For Bull, this level of detail, underpinned by standard procedures, is key. And he applies the same logic to everything from turning on the rim to regrooving. "You need to look deeper than replacing tyres just according to what your driver says."

Critics might argue that Ryder's approach only suits an organisation running 22,500 trucks and trailers. Bull disagrees. "Getting the best out of tyres always comes down to focus and procedures. Once they're set, they're self-maintaining to a degree, whether you've got 100 or 10,000 vehicles." **TE**