

Pressure group

Continental is pressing the EU to legislate for tyre pressure monitoring systems on trucks and to take action over misleading tyre label claims. Steve Banner reports

Safety plus the need for operators to extract maximum usable tyre life mean onboard TPMS (tyre pressure monitoring systems) should be mandatory on trucks. So say senior Continental executives, who are urging EU legislators to take action.

"Compulsory fitment is still under discussion without any firm date in view and I fail to understand why there is as yet no requirement," says Continental UK sales and marketing director for commercial tyres Arthur Gregg. "It really is a no-brainer, and TPMS should certainly be standard on coaches."

Currently, EU member states are adopting their own measures with, for example, Italy offering hauliers incentives to fit systems to trailers. While that is to be welcomed, such a piecemeal approach is not a sustainable answer, says the company.

Meanwhile, technology is improving. Continental is continuing to develop its ContiPressureCheck TPMS, for example, with the recent addition of 'automatic trailer learning'. This enables a tractor unit to identify and monitor all tyres on a trailer. "In 2015, our focus will be on working with telematics companies to integrate our tyre pressure information into their systems, too," says managing director David Smith.

Mandatory monitoring


This will enable hauliers to spot tyre problems in real time, while a truck is out on the highway. Depending on the seriousness of the glitch, operators will be able to make arrangements to have it resolved when the driver returns to base, or instruct a tyre fitter to meet the truck and sort it out before the tyre fails.

Mandatory onboard monitoring could reveal just how poor some fleets are at maintaining pressures, insists Gregg. "With our system, you get a warning when the pressure drops 10% too low and we reckon that would be triggered by at least 75% of

trucks on the highway," he says. And he points to the fact that low pressures also impact fuel economy.

Switching to low rolling resistance tyres improves fuel economy by 3–4%, but, again, only if pressures are correctly maintained, he insists. Nor is it the case that only long-distance European hauliers can benefit. "If you are on multi-drop work in the UK, you won't, but if you are doing motorway runs with perhaps one or two stops, then you will," he asserts.

Meanwhile, Gregg and his colleagues are also annoyed by what they see as a failure by government to ensure that information on mandatory tyre labels is accurate. Too little enforcement action is being taken against firms publishing misleading data on rolling resistance, as well as wet grip and noise, they claim.

"There are people in the tyre industry without much technical competence, other than the ability to print nice labels," murmurs David O'Donnell, Continental's head of global R&D for car and light truck tyres. 

Size matters

UK demand for replacement CV tyres is rising, with last year showing an increase of 8% against 2013's level at the time of writing.

So far as sizes are concerned, Continental's UK managing director David Smith predicts a gradual shift away from 295/80 R22.5 in favour of 315/70 R22.5, thanks to the latter's ability to cope with the additional weight Euro 6 imposes on steer axles. UK sales and marketing director Arthur Gregg is concerned, however, that some operators of Euro 6 trucks may not be aware of this issue, and may fit the former as a replacement when they should fit the latter.

As for prices in the face of tumbling oil prices, Gregg predicts no more than stability. "Tyre manufacturers are well aware of the volatility of the oil market, and what we don't want to do is cut prices in March only to put them up in April, if the cost of oil recovers again."

