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Are you leaving
too many miles
in the dust?

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real QUESTIONS
real ANSWERS

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Are you leaving too many miles in the dust

Our friend Harvey Brodsky, Tire Retread & Repair Information Bureau (TRIB) managing director, recommends everyone in trucking tour a retread facility.

If you've taken his advice, you watched the buffing machine remove the tread, leaving a pile of finely ground rubber behind.

*Are those extra miles left behind in the pile? In earlier issues of **Real Answers**, we've discussed the dangers of retreading too late. But can you lose miles by retreading too soon? And could your fleet be retreading more? Let's find out.*



20,000 MILES LOST

15,000 MILES LOST

10,000 MILES LOST

5,000 MILES LOST

0

What's the hard and fast rule for retreading?

The only hard and fast rule is mandated by the government: All fleets are required to pull steer tires when they reach $4/32$ nds remaining tread depth, while the limit for drive and trailer tires is $2/32$ nds. Of course, the deeper the tread, the more it helps protect the casings. Wait too long and the casings could be ruined beyond repair.

While some fleets are concerned about retreading too late – because they own too many wrecked casings – we notice some fleets are retreading too soon.

Can you give us an example?

Fleets who set pull points too conservatively may be losing valuable removal mileage.

Let's use Fleet X as an example. They pull Bridgestone M726 EL drive tires at $12/32$ " remaining tread depth, after clocking 240,000 miles. Brand-new, the M726 EL tires had $32/32$ " tread depth.

That works out to 12,000 miles per 32nd.

Why pull so early?

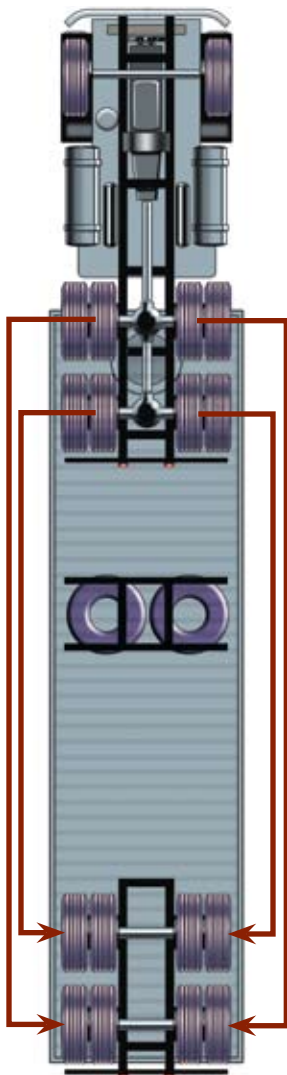
Drivers are often worried the treads don't appear as aggressive as they did when they were new, especially if winter is around the corner. Remember the M726 EL drives start out with one full inch of tread. So when the tires reach $12/32$ " remaining tread depth, drivers feel the tires look worn out.

Rather than shipping the drive tires to the retreader with all that usable tread still on them, only to have it buffed away, many fleets are finding great success in moving them to the trailer position. It's like getting a brand new set of trailer tires.

How so?

The worn drive tires have $12/32$ " remaining tread depth. Compare that with typical brand-new trailer tires.

Fleets who regularly use this method find tires worn on the drive axles produce a nice, smooth-wearing pattern that's great on the trailer axles. And the trailer position wears so slowly, most fleets discover they gain a lot of extra miles by running the last few 32nds of tread in the back.

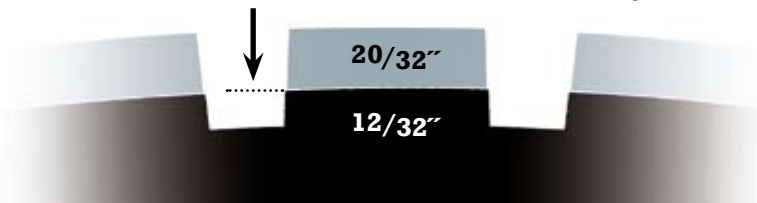


Moving the drive tires back to the trailer positions greatly increases the useful life of your tread, reducing cost per mile.

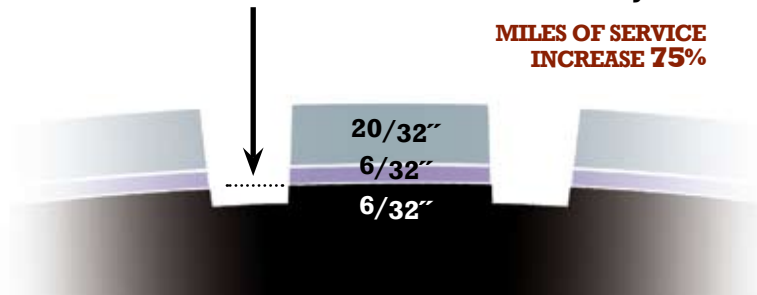
Retread later & extend tread life

ENVIRONMENT: Long Distance/Line Haul

	32nds USED	Typical Wear Rate, MILES/32nd	MILES
Drive	20	x 12,000	= 240,000
Trailer	0	x 30,000	= 0
TOTAL	20		240,000



	32nds USED	Typical Wear Rate, MILES/32nd	MILES
Drive	20	x 12,000	= 240,000
Trailer	6	x 30,000	= 180,000
TOTAL	26		420,000



MILES OF SERVICE INCREASE 75%

How much more?

If you use your drive tires 240,000 miles, move them back to the trailer axles and run them down to $6/32$ ", you could add an additional 180,000 miles, on average. The grand total is 420,000 miles before the tires are pulled for retreading. Quite a gain, not to mention the increase in fuel economy, as shallow tires are at their most fuel-efficient.

Now, let's take this test one step further: Keep the trailer tires on for another 32nd of wear and pull at $5/32$ ". You could enjoy another 30,000 miles of service, for a grand total of 450,000 miles.

Why shouldn't we try it?

First ask yourself how you arrived at a $6/32$ " pull point.

Often we learn the pull point was copied from a well-known fleet and "if it's good enough for them, it's good enough for us."

Yet are the two fleets exactly the same? You may manage the same equipment, but haul lighter freight. Just one difference could skew the results.

Other times we hear “it’s something we’ve always done.” That’s not necessarily a bad thing, but things may have changed in the meantime. For example, let’s say you started a strict inflation maintenance program three years ago, and now your fleet is enjoying superior tire life. That policy has a tremendous affect on retreadability – and quite possibly, optimum pull points.

That’s a lot to think about.

Which is why you should collaborate with your retreader. That’s what they’re there for – to examine opportunities and recommend policies that boost your profitability.

They’re going to scrutinize your tires, your casings, your scrap. Your retreader will total casing repair costs and count the number of non-retreadable tires.

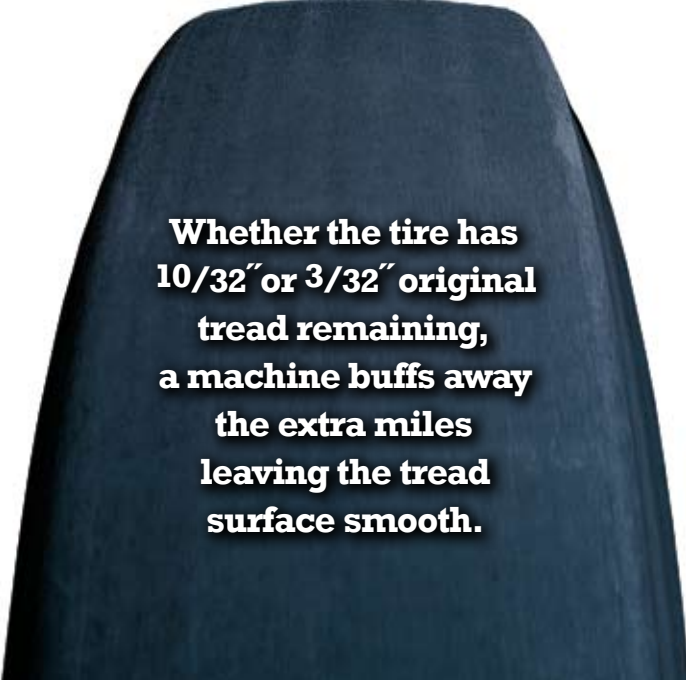
Your retreader may recommend dropping the pull point one 32nd. Test it. See if it works on your trucks, on your routes. You could be adding an additional 30,000 miles to your grand total mileage – and that’s just for one truck in your fleet.

The point is, let your retreading expert help you do the math. And while your retreader is analyzing your casings, ask them if your fleet is scrapping too soon.

What’s that?

Many fleets have casing requirements that tell tire technicians when to pull and scrap casings.

Some fleets never retread the same casing twice. Some never retread a casing older than five or seven years, while others never spend more than \$50 on a casing repair. We’ve also heard of fleets scrapping casings when the warranty is over.



**Whether the tire has
10/32" or 3/32" original
tread remaining,
a machine buffs away
the extra miles
leaving the tread
surface smooth.**

That’s similar to trading in your car when the warranty runs out.

Scrapping policies can get out of date – same as retreading too early or too late. Again, ask your retreader for help. After examining your casings and repair bills, your retreader may recommend adding another retread to the mix. Or downgrading the casing from over-the-road to regional, P&D or even yard goat, extending casing life and saving money.


Isn’t regional hauling tougher on tires than long haul?

It’s true that curbing damage and high-scrub driving is brutal on treads. But a tough tread compound can handle much of the abuse. The major difference between the two vocations can be heat.

An extra-long distance tractor-trailer hauls at highway speeds for hours and hours at a time with few breaks. A P&D truck often drives fewer miles at lower speeds and makes more stops, allowing tires and casings to cool even though the treads may be getting a lot of scrub. We’ve seen a few P&D fleets that were able to retread over and over and over (as many as 10 times!) before their casings were worn out.

What else can we do?

Properly maintained tires are better able to resist damage from debris, whether they’re new or retreaded.

Even picking stones from the grooves reduces belt bruises, multiple punctures and other damage, giving you and your retreader a greater chance of reducing repair bills and extending tread and casing life. 

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Do you do this?

Like clockwork, we change the oil in our cars every 3,000 miles.

Yet oil and car manufacturers recommend 5,000 to 7,500 miles between oil changes. Even Tom and Ray, hosts of *Car Talk* on National Public Radio, recommend an oil change every 5,000 miles. It’s difficult to change something “we’ve always done,” even when it puts money into our pocket.