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EPA

Environmental Fact Sheet

EPA Guideline for Purchasing Retread Tires

Managing Scrap Tires

In 1986, 220 million tires were discarded in the United States. Tires from passenger cars and light trucks accounted for approximately 80 percent of the total, with the remainder being bus, truck, and off-road tires. While scrap tires often can be retreaded, sold as used tires, or otherwise reused or recycled, they are typically discarded in landfills, tire stockpiles, and along roadsides or waterways.

Tires create problems for landfill managers because they do not stay buried. They rise fully or partly to the surface causing uneven settling of the landfill. When they surface, they provide homes for rodents and mosquitoes.

Scrap tire piles present similar problems and also pose a serious threat as fuel for fires. When a four-million-tire pile ignited in Winchester, Virginia, it took eight months to control the fire at a cost to the federal government alone of $1.2 million. There are approximately three billion tires in piles in the U.S., and the piles are increasing by 150 to 200 million tires per year.

State and local governments are using a number of tools to manage the scrap tire disposal problem. These include increasing landfill and tipping fees for tires, banning tires from landfills, restricting tires to monofills, imposing taxes on new tires to raise revenue for managing scrap tires, and building waste-to-energy facilities to burn tire chips.

Procurement Guideline

On November 17, 1988, the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) issued a guideline for purchasing retread tires. The purpose of the guideline is to use the stimulus of government procurement to increase the use of retread tires within both government and private sectors. The guideline requires all federal agencies and all state and local government agencies and contractors that use federal funds to purchase retread tires or tire retreading services to the maximum extent practicable.

Recommended Retread Tires Preference

The federal retread tires guideline applies to purchases of replacement tires for automobiles, light and heavy trucks and trailers, buses, and off-road vehicles. Original-equipment tires are covered by National Highway Traffic Safety Administration regulations, which require manufacturers to equip their new vehicles with new tires. The guideline recommends that agencies (1)

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obtain retreading services for their used tires and (2) purchase retread tires.

Obtaining Retreading Services

Retreading services can be purchased in a number of ways. Typically, the purchasing agency specifies to the retreading contractor the type of tread desired. The contractor may also be asked to guarantee the tread for a specified mileage, with provisions included for refunding a percentage of the retreading cost, depending on the amount of tread remaining when and if the tire fails.

Purchasing Retread Tires

All departments and agencies in the Executive Branch of the federal government except the Department of Defense and the U.S. Postal Service must use the General Service Administration (GSA) tire schedule. They must order a retread tire in lieu of a new tire whenever a retread is available on the schedule in the size, load range, and tread designation desired. If any of these mandatory users is granted a waiver from GSA to purchase off the schedule, the user must consider purchasing a retread tire or retreading services over purchasing a new tire. Retread tires are available from several sources. Many retreaders operate wholesale or retail outlets from which retread tires can be purchased. These tires often carry the same warranty as new tires.

Federal Regulation of Retread Tires

All tires are regulated by the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration through the Federal Motor Vehicle Safety Standards (FMVSS). The standard for retreads, FMVSS 117, specifies performance, labeling, and certification requirements; its underlying purpose is safety. The only other regulation affecting retreads is a prohibition on the use of retreads on the front wheels of buses.

Principal Federal Procuring Agencies

The General Services Administration (GSA) is the lead federal agency for tire specifications and tire procurement. In November 1990, GSA revised its specifications to include retread replacement tires:

- ZZ-T-381: passenger car, light-truck, and truck/bus tires;
- ZZ-T-410: pneumatic industrial tires;
- ZZ-T-1083: low-speed, off-road tires; and
- ZZ-T-1619: agricultural tires.

GSA also prepared guidelines explaining how to qualify retread tires, held meetings with industry, and conducted a tire workshop for industry and federal user agencies to discuss the new specifications and tire testing.

Upon completing its first year of testing retread tires for qualification under the new ZZ-T-381 specification, GSA published a qualified products list. The list includes one light-truck bias retreader, two light-truck radial retreaders, and one truck/bus radial retreader. GSA's latest Federal Supply Schedule 26 II contains retreads for 70 of the tire sizes/types, including six light-truck radial retreads, three light-truck bias retreads, and 61 truck/bus radial retreads.

Further Information

For information about GSA's specifications, the tires qualified products list (QPL), and QPL testing, please contact the Federal Tire Program at (703) 603-1215. For information about the Federal Supply Schedule, the Federal Tire Program may be reached at (703) 603-1227. For further information about the EPA guideline, including copies of the guideline, you may contact EPA's procurement guidelines hotline at (703) 941-4452.