



SAFETY FIRST

Tyres are, perhaps, one of the most underrated – or under maintained – items on tow vehicles and caravans.

Consider this: before heading out on tour, you check the level of the engine oil and, if you're wise, the coolant level, too. You might check the water levels in the starting battery, and if you have an automatic transmission, you might even check the fluid level there.

But how often do you check the air pressures of your tyres? Do you even own a good pressure gauge? Or do you wait until the steering feels 'floaty' before getting around to using the air pump at the local servo?

The troubles with this latter approach are many. Tyre pressures should always be checked and adjusted when the air inside is cold since the pressure inside a tyre will increase as it heats up – say, after driving around town before finally pulling into the servo.

For caravanners, maintaining ideal tyre pressures is of great importance, especially when you consider the cost of new rubber. A good set of all-terrains for the 4WD tow vehicle could set you back \$1500. Add two or four additional tyres for the van, and you're talking very big numbers.

And the potential consequences of a tyre blowout when you're hauling 2.5t or more at highway speeds don't bear thinking about.

THE SAFE-T-TYRE

A number of companies have released sophisticated tyre pressure monitoring systems in recent times; we have spent the last couple of months testing the new Safe-T-Tyre unit from Safety Dave.

This system includes a 3.5in LCD monitor that secures to the windshield via a good-quality suction cup. The screen is clear and easy to read, and features an automatic backlight that will turn on when it detects the vehicle is moving and it is dark enough. The built-in lithium battery, meanwhile, is good for 60 hours of use before it'll need to be recharged via the supplied 12V power adaptor.

The system can monitor up to 22 tyres, though only eight sensors are provided in the pack (enough for the typical caravan setup, in other words). The water-resistant



sensors screw onto the tyres' valve stems, constantly monitoring the pressure of the air inside the tyre and sending the information back to the monitor inside the cabin of the tow vehicle. The sensors employ a small hex screw (tool included) to 'lock' onto the valve stem.

This means that you, the driver, have a real-time understanding of what's happening with your tyres as you cruise to your destination. If the air pressure drops below, or climbs above, your pre-set level based on the ideal 'range' (32psi when cold and 36psi when hot, for example), an alarm will sound, a red light will flash, and an icon corresponding to the offending tyre will flash. The alarm can be turned off at the push of a button; however, the red light will remain lit until the pressure in the tyre has been adjusted. Should the tyre be punctured, a 'fast leakage' alert will sound.

An ideal pressure range can be set for the tyres on each individual axle, which is sensible considering it's often necessary to run higher pressures on the rear axle of the tow vehicle to account for the higher load back there. The system can monitor a range of pressures of between 15-210psi.

I particularly liked that the system can 'disconnect' from the trailer at the push of a button, so if you've unhitched the van and the vehicle is out of the 200m operating range of the sensors/receiver, no alarm will sound.

Other features of the Safe-T-Tyre include the ability to select your preferred unit of measure, PSI or Bar, and a temperature function that provides the internal air temperature of each tyre in Celsius or Fahrenheit.

The system comes pre-programmed to your touring setup, whether it be four wheels (vehicle only), six wheels (single-axle van), eight wheels (tandem-axle van) or more. Herein rests the only small problem: should you wish to tow a van with more or less wheels to monitor, there's a bit of rigmarole involved, and the instructional booklet – which is otherwise excellent – doesn't explain the process. We trust, however, that the Safety Dave 24-hour freecall service would solve that problem.

In terms of value for money, the system scores well. Retailing for \$489, it's cheap peace of mind. What's more, Safety Dave throws in eight spare CR1632 lithium batteries for the sensors, reasoning that such batteries would be hard to come by in remote areas. Oh, and the stainless

steel valve caps included in the pack are a welcome touch, too.

Overall, we were impressed with the Safe-T-Tyre. It is a well-considered, good-value unit that does everything it promises. Considering just one good tyre can cost up to \$400, it's well worth considering.

– Max Taylor

Safe-T-Tyre

RRP: \$489

Where: 1 Edgecombe Court, Moorabbin, Vic, and at the major state caravan shows around Australia

More info: 1800 876 700, www.safe-t-tyre.com.au

Rating: ★★★★★

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