Tire Pressure

I am writing this article as the snow is flying in Ohio and the memory of the beautiful weather at the Florida State Rally is becoming a distant memory. Airstream Service and Parts Departments wants to thank everyone (approx. 538 units) who helped make it a huge success! It was great to see so many familiar faces; I hope everyone who attended enjoyed it also.

This month I thought I would try to address a subject that came up during the Motorhome Seminar at the Florida State Rally. A gentleman asked how we arrive at the tire pressure listed on the unit weight sticker; he stated this was confusing when he was having his unit weighed at the Rally. The sticker said 120 lbs., but he only puts 110lbs of air in his tires. The people doing the weighing used the 120 lb. figure to establish his carrying capacity.

The tire pressure information, which Airstream uses on VIN and other documents are taken from the Incomplete Vehicle Document, which comes with each chassis shipped to Airstream from the various chassis suppliers. The Incomplete Vehicle Document gives final stage manufacturers directions on complying with Federal Motor Vehicle Safety Standards and other information regarding the incomplete chassis. On the front of Incomplete Vehicle Document is a label giving the Gross Vehicle Weight Rating (GVWR), Gross Axle Weight Ratings (GAWR), tire, rim and other information. It also gives the maximum tire pressure to achieve the Gross Axle Weight Ratings. This assumes that the final customer could load the completed motor home to maximum capacity. We use this tire pressure on our labels as due diligence to protect our customers. If a customer does not load his/her motor home to maximum capacity, it is possible that the tire pressure could be reduced to give a smoother ride etc. This must only be done however, after careful analysis and weighing of the motor home and after contacting the tire manufacturer for the tire carrying capacity at the lower pressure. I do not recommend that our customers lower the tire pressure below the values specified. It is the customer's responsibility to frequently check their tire pressure (including inside duals) for the proper pressure.

Published trailer tire pressure is taken from the tire itself and is the pressure the tire manufacturer specifies to achieve the tire's maximum carrying capacity.

How important is Air Pressure and what can I do to maintain it?

The most common way of damaging tires is improper inflation. As tires lose pressure over time it causes them to experience irregular tread wear, poor vehicle handling and traction, and decreased gas mileage. Under inflated tires can build up excessive heat and blow out without warning. Under inflated tires can also reduce fuel economy by 2% for every pound of air pressure below recommended inflation. Pressure should be checked at least once a month using a good quality tire pressure gauge. Pressure should be checked when the tires are cold.

Cold Inflation Pressure The measure of air pressure of a tire that is not warm from driving (less than 1 mile or standing for at least 3 hours)

You can find out what the proper inflation numbers on your tires are by checking the owner's manual of your vehicle. Even if the tires have been changed since the vehicle was new, the car manufacturers recommended pressures still apply. Also remember to check your spare tire for loss of air.

How Often?

Michelin recommends checking air pressure once a month, and before a long trip. Whether you have a full-sized or minispare, make sure that it is properly inflated as well.

The Best Time to Inflate

Air expands when it' s hot and contracts when it' s cold. For accurate pressure, always check the pressure when the tires are "cold" — at least three hours after the vehicle has been stopped and before it has been driven one mile. It' s best to inflate your tires in the morning before the day' s heat.

For example, it is possible for a passenger tire initially inflated to 35 psi to lose 1/2 psi per month. A substantial, seasonal temperature change can also affect inflation pressure, with cold ambient temperatures causing effectively lower air pressure.

Valves and Valve Caps

The tire's valve is a very important maintenance item in terms of keeping the inflation air in your tires. These valves are ordinarily rubber, can deteriorate over time, and should be replaced when you buy new tires. At high speeds, a cracked, deteriorated rubber valve stem can bend from centrifugal force and allow air loss.

The valve cap is likewise an important item. Buy some good quality valve caps that can contain the inflation air should the core of the valve fail for any reason. Valve caps also keep out moisture, which could freeze and in turn depress the valve core, causing loss of air. The cap also keeps out dust and dirt particles, which could also interfere with the proper operation of the valve core and cause loss of air.

Inflation Tips

Purchase a good pressure gauge and check it for accuracy with your tire dealer.

Beware of public gauges at the gas station. They are often abused and unreliable.

I believe the majority of RVers are well aware of how important tire care is to traveling safely, but this continues to be a frequently asked about subject.

Key Fobs

A very nice lady (Henny Koopman) at the Rally brought to my attention a problem she was having with the Touchtronic Key Fobs that came with her motorhome .

She indicated she found a place in Sarasota that not only repaired them but sold replacement key fobs as well:

Autotronics Phone: 941-366-0775 1507 N.Washington Blvd. Fax: 941-366-0594 Sarasota , Florida 34236 Email: autotronic2000@aol.com

Why RV' s are better.

1st tourist: " Good to meet a fellow countryman. Does your hotel overlook the sea?"

2nd tourist: " Yes, and it also overlooks comfortable beds, good food and just about everything else."