



## Checked your tyres' age lately?

At the recent Thanksgiving at Lakeside American theme day held at Lakeside Park on November 9, a front tyre on a car started to disintegrate while travelling down the main straight. The car was able to pull over to the side immediately, off the bitumen. The tyre had lost most of its tread. This is known as delamination.

A tyre delamination usually involves the bottom layer of steel belts separating from the second layer of steel belts and outside tread. A large strip of tread (and sometimes accompanying smaller pieces) separating from the tyre while in use often identifies a tyre delamination. A delamination will decrease a driver's ability to control the vehicle and may result in a collision or rollover. It is common for people to refer to tread separations as 'blowouts'. However, a blowout is a sudden loss of air pressure. A delamination does not necessarily mean a loss of air pressure. Sometimes, the tyre will lose the tread but retain its air pressure throughout the accident - as happened at Lakeside.



As tyres age, they become more susceptible to tread separation. Even when a tyre is unused and sitting on a tyre rack, the ageing process makes tread separation more likely. Ideally, stored tyres should be kept in a cool, dry environment out of direct sunlight and away from electric motors or other sources of ozone. Car and tyre makers are now commonly recommending **six years** as a maximum tyre age. For more on tyre ageing causes, warning signs and tyre age coding, see : <http://www.bridgestone.com.au/tyres/passenger/care/age.aspx>

Another good reference is [http://www.carbibles.com/tyre\\_bible.html](http://www.carbibles.com/tyre_bible.html)

Tyre date codes are the best evidence of tyre age - not the receipt from when you bought them. All tyres are produced with a serial Tyre Identification Number (or TIN) that shows the date of manufacture. The last four digits (for tyres made after 2000) or three digits (pre 2000) of the serial TIN indicate the week and year that the tyre was made. For example, '3006' is the 30th week of 2006. These are on the writer's car - but were not purchased 'new' until March 2007. This is a common problem for lower-volume tyres for enthusiast vehicles - they can sit around for a while before they are sold. It is worth checking the real age of the tyre when you buy them 'new' (or second-hand on the internet!). In either case now, these tyres need to be replaced. The vehicle in question has done less than 36,000km since the tyres were installed, and the tread blocks aren't significantly worn. Which leads to the second problem - low mileage use will not result in tyres needing to be replaced due to tread wear. Age is more likely to be the tyre replacement criteria for your enthusiast vehicle.



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t: 07 3285 1763  
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