

Tires, Tread & TESTING

GOODYEAR



by Mark H. Stowers

Tires - an overlooked part of your vehicle - that is, until you need them. *Really* need them. Hitting the replacement tire market this year, Goodyear introduces the newest addition to their Eagle lineup, The Goodyear Eagle featuring ResponsEdge Technology.

Goodyear invited journalists from across North America to Phoenix, Ariz., to test the new tire at the Bob Bondurant School of High Performance Driving and on local highways through the South Mountain area.

Technology Tire

With gorgeous Arizona sunshine surrounding us, our day began with an explanation of the ample technology built into the new Goodyear Eagle.

Carbon fiber, KEVLAR, Aquachutes and TredLock microgrooves help make up this tire. No, this isn't a military vehicle tire, but carbon fiber is the same material used in fighter and commercial jet planes, motorcycle helmets, and sports equipment such as ice skates, snow skis, hockey sticks, tennis rackets, golf clubs and sailboats.



By adding it to the tire's outer sidewall, it helps stiffen the tire and keep more rubber on the road. This enhances cornering and maneuverability and steering precision. Carbon fiber weighs less than the same amount of steel belts, is three times stronger and more durable and helps dampen vibration while resisting abrasions and corrosion.

Over the top of the belt package, the tire also sports a sound- and

shock-absorbing InsuLayer made with Dupont KEVLAR®, to help provide a smooth, quiet ride, while promoting even treadwear. And the TredLock microgrooves lock together in tight maneuvers to keep more tread on the road and traction for the vehicle.

"The unique construction allows our engineers to develop a product we call a performance tire with manners," says Bob Toth, Goodyear's marketing manager, auto tires.

Track Time

With two Cadillac CTSs and two 300 Series BMWs waiting for our lead feet, (one of each fit with the ResponsEdge Technology and the other fit with comparable Michelins), we broke into two groups and put the tires through their paces. The first course was laid out for cornering and traction on both wet and dry pavement. There were plenty of sharp turns allowing us to get the feel of how the tires handled.

Running through the cones with the Michelins, I felt some drift in corners but didn't feel out of control. Braking seemed relatively easy. But after switching to the ResponsEdge Technology, I definitely felt them hugging the turns with very minimal drift and offering plenty of grip coming out of each turn. Stopping was impeccable.



Moving over to the slalom course, the dominance of the ResponsEdge Technology really stood out. Imagine yourself driving the Olympic ski slalom, veering in and out but using orange traffic cones. The Michelins hung on for dear life but drifted quite a bit as I sprung more than a few cones in the air. Advice from the Goodyear test

drivers manning the course said to hit 45 mph through the course. My partner Dave Young and I were quite a bit under that and couldn't imagine hitting that number without rolling one of these performance beauties.

The ResponsEdge tires performed beautifully and hugged each cone like a newborn baby, tender and sweet, leaving each one firmly in place. An accident avoidance course was quickly set up allowing vehicles to veer quickly to the left and immediately back to the right, much like trying to avoid an errant squirrel or even a driver that comes into your lane. The results were the same: Drift with

the Michelins and plenty of cone popping while the ResponsEdge hugged the pavement with each quick maneuver.

Our afternoon test drive took us on Arizona highways and up a scenic South Mountain tour, putting each set of tires on trial. While the Goodyear ResponsEdge gave a slightly louder road hum than the Michelins, their performance on the tight, winding curves and handling through the mountains certainly outweighed any road noise. The minimal road noise could be covered by any radio/CD output though.

Final Grade: A

An impressive tire brimming with technology that performed brilliantly on the test track and the open highway. If you are looking for replacement tires and you are in the high performance touring driver who wants to experience a feel for the road but don't want to sacrifice a smooth, comfortable ride, this tire is for you. A full range of sizes will be available for the performance market and Goodyear is fielding requests to use the tire as original equipment on upcoming models. This all-season tire probably has more technology than you'll ever need but just like your vehicle, you'll be glad its there when you need it.

For more information on the Goodyear featuring ResponsEdge Technology, log onto www.Goodyear.com. And if you'd like to check out the Bondurant School of High Performance Driving, log onto www.bondurant.com.