WINTER TIRES – SAFETY MOMENT

As winter approaches some people may wonder; what is the difference between all season and winter tires for their vehicles. In North America the “mountain snowflake” symbol is used to identify a winter tire and is shown below.

- This symbol denotes a tire that has a minimum rating of 10% better snow grip than a reference all season tire.
- This standard was developed in 1999 with an agreement between the Rubber Association of Canada and Transport Canada as well as associated organizations in the United States.
- With advancements in polymer technology, some modern winter tires currently have a rating of 30-40% better snow grip than the reference all season tire. Due to this advancement, Transport Canada has begun to advocate for a higher standard to identify a winter tire.

The Alberta Ministry of Transportation annually collects traffic accident information. According to the Alberta Traffic Collision Statistics in 2014 during a six month period of November to April (when snow and ice may be on the roads) there was an average of 79 500 vehicle collisions. This is higher than the six month period of May – October when there was an average of 65 200 vehicle collisions. This data suggests that snowy and icy road conditions leads to a higher probability of being in a traffic accident.

It is interesting to note that comparing the same periods, there were 136 fatal collisions during the winter months as compared to 192 fatal collisions during the summer months. This data suggests that although there is a higher probability of being in a road accident during snowy and icy conditions, that there is a higher probability of surviving a traffic incident during the winter months than the summer months.

References:
2. Website: https://www.transportation.alberta.ca/Content/docType47/Production/AR2014.pdf