

Mandatory Winter Tires in Germany

In the last few days we have been frequently asked about the **amended German Road Traffic Ordinance** concerning winter tires. I have compiled the most important questions and answers for you.



"Mandatory Winter Tires"

The German federal and state transport ministers agreed on incorporating mandatory winter tires into the German Road Traffic Ordinance already in October.

On Friday, November 26, 2010, the Federal Council of Germany passed the respective amendment of the Road Traffic Ordinance. This will become effective in the next few days when it is published in the Federal Law Gazette.



What does the law stipulate?

From now on, "mud and snow tires" (marked M + S) are mandatory in case of black ice, hard-packed snow, slush, and slippery frost.

Commercial winter tires are marked with an M + S symbol on the sidewall. The tread of such tires guarantees the necessary traction in winter driving conditions like snow, cold and icy roads.

The term "winter tires" will not be included in the Road Traffic Ordinance. Mandatory winter tires for a specific period of time (e.g. October to March) will not be prescribed by the Road Traffic Ordinance. Those, who are caught with summer tires in winter conditions and on icy roads, will be fined with 40 Euro instead of 20 Euro as before, which is stated in the Regulation amending the Road Traffic Ordinance. However, the driver will be fined, not the owner. If traffic is impeded due to unsuitable tires, the driver will be fined with 80 Euro.

What is a winter tire?

According to the UN-ECE-Regulation (ECE-R 30 and 54), EC Directives (Directive 92/23 EEC), and Road Traffic Ordinance (§36), winter tires need to be marked with M+S (M&S, M.S.). This applies also to so-called all-season tires, which are marked accordingly.

Some useful information is also the "snow flake" marking (in addition to the M + S marking), which certifies that the tire passed a test on its winter qualities. However, this marking is not compulsory. The marking M+S is sufficient for a winter or an all-season tire. The marking is on the sidewall. It specifies that the tire is still safe in mud and snow (better traction).

When will this change become effective?

The regulation will become effective one day after it has been published in the Federal Law Gazette.

For whom is this amendment applicable?

The amendment is applicable for all car, truck, bus and motorbike drivers. Also vehicles that are

registered abroad need to be equipped with the required tires when driving in Germany. Apart from that, heavy commercial vehicles (**busses and trucks**) only need winter tires on the driving axles.

Do the police check the tires?

The police can easily see on the sidewall whether the vehicle is equipped with respective M+S tires.

Do I risk losing insurance coverage?

Yes, the motor vehicle comprehensive insurance can refuse payment in case of an accident partially or completely if missing M+S tires were the cause of an accident.

Are there winter tires for forklifts?

There are 3 different kinds of tires for forklifts

1. Pneumatic tires
2. Super elastic tires
3. Solid rubber tires

There are no specific winter tires for forklifts. However, if the forklift is primarily used outside, it should be equipped with tires with sufficient tread depth. If the weather conditions are very bad or if the forklift is used for snow clearing, it can be fitted with tire chains.



Should you have further questions on this topic, please contact your Safety Specialist.