

Is that tyre bargain a deal or a steal after SA's looting?

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Hotline set up to report possession of looted tyres



Lubin Ozoux, CEO of SRSA

Bargain hunters beware: If a deal looks too good to be true, that ad on social media or online classifieds sites could actually be showing off goods stolen during the looting frenzy that took place in KwaZulu-Natal and Gauteng this month.

Sumitomo Rubber South Africa (SRSA), manufacturer of the Dunlop tyre brand, said its Durban Westville warehouse was invaded unlawfully and vandalised on Sunday, 11 July 2021 – and the company is aware that much of the stolen passenger and motorcycle tyre stock is now being sold online.

In videos circulating on social media, groups of unidentified individuals were seen making off with tyres in the warehouse.

Lubin Ozoux, CEO of SRSA, said, “The loss in stock and assets is estimated to be approximately R90m with 70,000 tyres stolen from our own warehouse from an estimated total of 140,000 tyres known to have been looted from across the tyre manufacturing chain. However, there will be a substantial impact not only for the Dunlop business but for the entire value chain, including employees, the community and the supply chain.”

“We strongly condemn these illegal actions. Looted commodities are being offered at prices much lower than the normal pricing on numerous social media posts. This is a clear indication that these items have been looted. We do not support, under any circumstance, the purchase of goods from anyone other than reputable manufacturers and suppliers,” he added.

Those who know or suspect the possession of looted tyres can report this anonymously to the Looted Tyres Hotline on

Nduduzo Chala, Managing Executive of the South African Tyre Manufacturers Conference (SATMC) said the organisation stands in support of its members Sumitomo Rubber South Africa, Bridgestone SA, Continental Tyres South Africa and Goodyear South Africa.

“As the tyre sector value chain, let us stand together and fight the criminality witnessed. The tyres looted are already being sold on the streets and on social media platforms. We urge customers not to support this and for tyre fitment centres not to fit loose tyres without valid proof of purchase. Together we can stop the cycle of criminality,” he said.

The National Joint Operational and Intelligence Structure (NatJOINTS) co-chaired by the South African National Defence Force (SANDF), South African Police Service (SAPS) and the State Security Agency (SSA) has also issued a warning to those who were not part of the looting spree but are buying stolen property from the looters that they too, will be arrested for being in possession of stolen property.

Socio-economic losses

Businesses across the board have been brought to their knees by the widespread theft, vandalism and arson – from informal traders to large retail chains. The economic impact of the anarchy and destruction will be massive, in a country which was already grappling with low economic growth and alarmingly high unemployment levels.

Many will lose their livelihoods as businesses, big and small, are unable to continue operations. Supply chains have already been affected and many are struggling to access basics such as food, household essentials and medication.

“Thieves prey on people looking for the best price. At a time that there is such a large volume of illegally obtained goods now circulating in the market, people will need to have their wits about them to ensure they do not indirectly support this thievery,” said Ozoux.

He offered the following tips:

- Report known or suspected possession of looted tyres to the Looted Tyres Hotline.
- Tyre fitment centres should not fit loose tyres without valid proof of purchase.
- Approach purchases from unknown retailers and individuals with caution. Purchase only from reputable manufacturers and suppliers.
- If someone is listing items in bulk, that should be a red flag.
- If the item is marked at a drastically reduced price, that is another red flag.
- If the seller is unable to provide proof of purchase on a brand-new item, it could mean it has been illegally obtained.

“Purchasing items known to have been stolen in large quantities during the looting only does further damage to our country’s economy. It is almost the equivalent of stealing these goods yourself,” he added.

Purchasing through informal channels can encourage more criminal acts and further looting.

“As a brand we lead by example, and now is the time to live by our values. We are appealing to the public to refrain from purchasing any suspicious items for sale on social media. We ask that you discourage friends and family from purchasing the same,” said Ozoux.

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