

Sumitomo Rubber SA lends technical support to RAF/SATMC road safety programme

Issued by [Sumitomo Dunlop](#)

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This Transport Month and beyond, Sumitomo Rubber South Africa (SRSA) is supporting a joint programme by the Road Accident Fund (RAF) and the South African Tyre Manufacturers Conference (SATMC), aiming to ramp up tyre safety education and enforcement across South Africa.



Keith Phelps, group training manager: truck and bus at SRSA, providing technical training support to upskill traffic and road safety officers during the roadshow in Jozini

Keith Phelps, group training manager: truck and bus at SRSA, has been providing technical training support to upskill Traffic and Road Safety Officers around how to spot risky or illegal tyres that pose a threat to road safety.

This is part of an ongoing partnership between the RAF and the SATMC, where the focus is on empowering officers to better enforce tyre-related laws and regulations correctly and to educate commuters on various aspects of tyre safety.

By the end of the year, more than 1000 traffic officers are expected to have been trained.

Safety successes

Last month, a Gauteng roadshow saw more than 200 traffic officers trained and close to 2000 traffic fines issued for unsafe and illegal tyres during a two-hour education roadblock. In Jozini earlier this month, more than 180 officers were upskilled to spot dangerous tyres. The initiative also included an educational roadblock set up at the Jozini N2 intersection, to educate commuters about tyre safety and ensure that they get proper technical information on their tyres.

A Gqeberha roadshow was held from 12 to 13 October, where around 300 traffic officers participated. Another will take place in Cape Town from 26 to 27 October involving the metro's entire traffic department.

Phelps takes the law enforcement officers through what to look out for in terms of tyre wear patterns, sidewall damage, retreaded tyres, and more, that could affect the roadworthiness and legality of a tyre.

The training covers topics such as the importance of tyre safety, how to identify safe tyres (including tyre construction,

markings, fitment, tread depth standards, and more), how to maintain tyres properly, and the dangers of illegal and unsafe second-hand tyres.

Says Phelps, "Road users need to know the dangers of operating vehicles with worn or poorly inflated tyres, and traffic officers need to be able to identify and weed out unroadworthy tyres and vehicles."



Phelps empowering officers to enforce tyre-related laws, check for tyre wear patterns, damage and roadworthiness of a tyre

Tread safely for road safety

Data from the Road Traffic Management Corporation's (RTMC) State of Road Safety Report for the period January to December 2021 shows that 41% of crashes occurred due to tyre burst prior to the crash, while a further 15% of crashes were due to smooth tyres. Meanwhile, South Africa's National Road Safety Strategy 2016-2030 notes that "...tyres are a major issue as both burst and smooth tyres suggest tyres not being replaced or maintained regularly enough to maintain required roadworthiness standards. To address this and other issues greater emphasis needs to be placed on law enforcement interventions aimed at ensuring that vehicles are roadworthy."

Nduduzo Chala, SATMC managing executive, said, "Being the sole point of contact between a vehicle and the road, tyres play a crucial role in vehicle performance, handling, and safety on the roads. As the SATMC and RAF, we know that equipping law enforcement and road users with the knowledge of proper tyre safety is an essential step in our ongoing battle against road accidents in South Africa."

RAF road safety senior manager, Siphamandla Gumbi, added, "The RAF conducts countrywide workshops, educational programmes and marketing campaigns to promote safe walking, driving, cycling, and passenger habits, and to empower the enforcement of road rules. In this regard, we have partnered with experts in tyre usage such as the SATMC in order to continue the fight against road crash injuries and fatalities by increasing awareness and shifting the mindsets of all road users."

The ongoing programme will include educational roadshows and on-road educational roadblocks in all nine provinces of South Africa, with special emphasis on major transport hubs like KwaZulu-Natal, the Western Cape, and Gauteng. A total of 12 sessions will be conducted until March 2024.

According to the SATMC, illicit trade of tyres into South Africa, coupled with the country's unregulated second-hand tyre industry, are posing a serious threat to the safety of South African consumers.

Better-informed consumers would result in a decline in the sale of such tyres, ultimately saving lives and improving road safety – a key goal of the [Road Safety Partnership South Africa](#) which Sumitomo Rubber SA is a member of.

The message is clear: Prioritise tyre care and safety. Buy reputable tyres. Choose new tyres over second-hand. Inflate tyres correctly. Ensure your tyre tread is above 1.6mm. Carry out wheel alignment, balancing and tyre rotation at recommended intervals.

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