



U.S. Department
of Transportation
Federal Aviation
Administration

Advisory Circular

Subject: Aircraft Tire Maintenance and
Operational Practices

Date: 9/11/18

AC No: AC 20-97B

Initiated by: AFS-300

Change: 1

1. PURPOSE OF THIS ADVISORY CIRCULAR (AC). This AC provides recommended tire care and maintenance practices needed to assure the safety of support personnel and the continued airworthiness of aircraft. Specifically, this AC provides guidance on the installation, inflation, maintenance, and removal of aircraft tires. In addition, this AC provides guidance on those operational practices necessary to maintain safe aircraft operations. This AC is not mandatory and does not constitute a regulation. It is issued for guidance purposes and to outline acceptable tire maintenance and operational practices under the provisions of Title 14 of the Code of Federal Regulation (14 CFR) parts [43](#) and [91](#). In lieu of following this method without deviation, operators may elect to follow an alternative method that has also been found acceptable by the Federal Aviation Administration (FAA). The contents of this document do not have the force and effect of law and are not meant to bind the public in any way. This document is intended only to provide clarity to the public regarding existing requirements under the law or agency policies.

2. PRINCIPAL CHANGES. This change adds required paragraphs and updates references and hyperlinks throughout the AC.

PAGE CONTROL CHART

Remove Pages	Dated	Insert Pages	Dated
Pages 1 thru 5	4/18/05	Pages 1 thru 5	9/11/18
Page 7	4/18/05	Pages 7 and 8	9/11/18

Rick Domingo
Executive Director, Flight Standards Service



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1. PURPOSE OF THIS ADVISORY CIRCULAR (AC). This AC provides recommended tire care and maintenance practices needed to assure the safety of support personnel and the continued airworthiness of aircraft. Specifically, this AC provides guidance on the installation, inflation, maintenance, and removal of aircraft tires. In addition, this AC provides guidance on those operational practices necessary to maintain safe aircraft operations. This AC is not mandatory and does not constitute a regulation. It is issued for guidance purposes and to outline acceptable tire maintenance and operational practices under the provisions of Title 14 of the Code of Federal Regulations (14 CFR) parts [43](#) and [91](#). In lieu of following this method without deviation, operators may elect to follow an alternative method that has also been found acceptable by the Federal Aviation Administration (FAA). The contents of this document do not have the force and effect of law and are not meant to bind the public in any way. This document is intended only to provide clarity to the public regarding existing requirements under the law or agency policies.

2. AUDIENCE. This AC is intended for aircraft owners, operators, and the flying public.

3. WHERE YOU CAN FIND THIS AC. You can find this AC on the FAA's website at https://www.faa.gov/regulations_policies/advisory_circulars and on the Dynamic Regulatory System (DRS) website at <https://drs.faa.gov>.

4. WHAT THIS AC CANCELS. AC 20-97A, High-Speed Tire Maintenance and Operational Practices, dated May 13, 1987, is canceled.

5. RELATED REGULATIONS AND DOCUMENTS.

a. Title 14 of the Code of Federal Regulations (14 CFR):

- (1) Part [21](#) Subpart [O](#), Technical Standard Order Approvals.
- (2) Part [23](#), Airworthiness Standards: Normal Category Airplanes.
- (3) Part [25](#), Airworthiness Standards: Transport Category Airplanes.
- (4) Part [27](#), Airworthiness Standards: Normal Category Rotorcraft.
- (5) Part [29](#), Airworthiness Standards: Transport Category Rotorcraft.
- (6) Part [43](#), Maintenance, Preventive Maintenance, Rebuilding, and Alteration.
- (7) Part [145](#), Repair Stations.

b. FAA ACs. You can find the following ACs on the FAA's website at https://www.faa.gov/regulations_policies/advisory_circulars.

(1) AC [25-7](#), Flight Test Guide for Certification of Transport Category Airplanes.

(2) AC [121.195-1](#), Operational Landing Distances for Wet Runways; Transport Category Airplanes.

(3) AC [145-4](#), Inspection, Retread, Repair, and Alterations of Aircraft Tires.

c. Technical Standard Orders (TSO). You can find the following TSO on the FAA's website at https://www.faa.gov/aircraft/air_cert/design_approvals/tso.

- [TSO-C62e](#), Aircraft Tires.

d. Airworthiness Directives (AD). You can find the following AD on the FAA's website at https://www.faa.gov/regulations_policies/airworthiness_directives.

- AD [87-08-09](#), Airbus Industrie, Boeing, British Aerospace, Lockheed, McDonnell Douglas; Specified Models. This AD addresses potential explosive chemical reactions in tires caused by the mixture of atmospheric oxygen and volatile gases.

e. FAA Handbooks. You can find the following Handbook on the FAA's website at https://www.faa.gov/regulations_policies/handbooks_manuals/aviation.

- FAA-H-8083-31, Aviation Maintenance Technician Handbook—Airframe.

f. Industry Standards. When the certificate holder (CH) accepts an industry specification or standard as the means of complying with the regulation, the standard becomes, in effect, a part of the CH's manual. The CH should have available a copy of any specification it references in its manual.

6. BACKGROUND.

a. As a result of the introduction and installation of new radial tire designs on the U.S. civil aircraft fleet, the FAA initiated a project to update standards and advisory support material. This includes revisions to TSO-C62d, Tires; AC 145-4, Inspection, Retread, Repair, and Alterations of Aircraft Tires; and AC 20-97A, High-Speed Tire Maintenance and Operational Practices.

b. Aircraft tires are rated at high deflections (32–35 percent) and inflated to high pressures to carry required loads with a minimum tire physical size and weight. The service interval for an aircraft tire is relatively short (taxi and takeoff, and landing and taxi) and intermittent, with substantial rest periods between service usage. Safe and reliable performance is achieved when the aircraft tire is operated in its designed environment. However, a tire's safe performance is jeopardized when it experiences either overheating or damage by foreign objects. Both conditions can be directly influenced by the operational practices of the operator and the local airport authority.

7. TIRE ENVIRONMENT—OPERATORS.

a. Tire Handling and Preparation for Service.

(1) Mounting Tubeless Tires. The operator should determine that the tire, wheel, and valve assembly are correct for the particular application, and that the wheel is clean and devoid of burrs or roughness. The operator may install a new wheel manufacturer-approved O-ring, following the wheel manufacturer's instructions for lubricants and O-ring installation. The valve (the body and the valve core seat) should be inspected and a new valve core installed. The tire and wheel manufacturer's instructions should be consulted prior to any use of mounting lubrication. Complete the tire and wheel assembly in accordance with the aircraft manufacturer's requirements and the component maintenance manual (CMM) recommended by the aircraft manufacturer.

(2) Mounting Tube-Type Tires. Select a new tube of the correct size for the tire. Dust the tire interior and tube exterior with talc. Confirm that a new valve core is installed in the valve stem and partially inflate the tube to achieve a slightly rounded condition. Insert the tube into the tire with the yellow stripe on the tube aligned with the red spot on the tire. Mount the assembly on the wheel so that the valve stem is properly aligned with the wheel valve hole. Complete the tire and wheel assembly in accordance with the wheel manufacturer's CMM recommendations.

(3) Initial Inflation for Tubeless Tires. Inflate the tire assembly in a safety cage using dry nitrogen to ensure, that the tire does not contain more than 5 percent oxygen by volume (Those aircraft required to comply with AD 87-08-09 shall inflate the tire wheel assembly in accordance with the procedure specified in that AD). The nitrogen source regulator should be pre-set to a value that is no more than the maximum load capacity of the tire. The tire growth will produce a drop in inflation pressure after initial inflation. Pressure stabilization normally occurs within 12 hours. After an initial 12-hour minimum stabilization period at the rated inflation pressure, the tire should maintain the inflation pressure within 5 percent of the initial pressure for a period of 24 hours. The leak source should be discovered and corrected if pressure losses exceed 5 percent. Operators should use this procedure when applicable or comply with the aircraft manufacturer's maintenance manuals, or CMM, as applicable to the aircraft and the assembly. Although AD 87-08-09 applies to a specific aircraft, the procedures set forth in the AD are acceptable procedures that should be used for similar tire assemblies.

NOTE: Part 25, § [25.733](#) requires an airplane with a maximum certificated takeoff weight of more than 75,000 pounds, having tires mounted on braked wheels must be inflated with dry nitrogen or other gases shown to be inert so that the gas mixture in the tire does not contain oxygen in excess of 5 percent by volume, unless it can be shown that the tire liner material will not produce a volatile gas when heated or that means are provided to prevent tire temperatures from reaching unsafe levels.

(a) Leaking Tire Assembly. Repeat the inflation pressure check if no leak site is found. If the assembly still exceeds the 5 percent pressure loss limit, de-mount the tire using the instructions in the CMM and in subparagraph [7b\(7\)\(c\)2](#), De-Mounting Tires from Wheels. Tag the tire and return the tire to the supplier in accordance with the instructions provided in the CMM and in subparagraph [7b\(7\)\(c\)3](#), Early Removal Documentation.

(b) Sidewall Vent Hole Bubbling. It is normal for the sidewall vent holes of tubeless tires to exhibit some bubbling of leak-check fluid following the initial inflation. Conclusions regarding a leaking assembly should not be based on sidewall vent hole bubbling.

(c) Temperature Effects. Changes in ambient temperature can influence leak test results. An ambient temperature change that creates a ± 5 °F change in the inflated assembly undergoing leak testing will alter gauge pressure by 1 percent. Therefore, the ambient temperature should be measured at the start and finish of the leak test to ensure that an ambient temperature change did not cause any pressure changes.

(4) Initial Inflation for Tube-Type Tires. Inflate the assembly to rated pressure in a safety cage and then deflate the tire in accordance with the CMM and subparagraph [7b\(7\)\(c\)2](#) instructions to optimize tube stretch. Re-inflate the tire to rated pressure in a safety cage. After an initial 12-hour minimum stabilization period at rated inflation pressure, the tire should maintain the inflation pressure within 5 percent of the initial pressure for a period of 24 hours. The leak source should be discovered and corrected if pressure losses exceed 5 percent.

(a) Air trapped between the tire and tube that is not released in the inflation process can affect the gauge pressure. The subsequent natural venting of this trapped air can create misleading results in the pressure loss test.

(b) The ambient temperature should be measured at the pressure test start and finish to assure that an ambient temperature change did not cause any pressure changes.

(5) Tire Manufacturer's Handling Criteria. The operator should comply with tire inspection recommendations specified in the tire manufacturer's CMM, and consult the tire inspection advice set forth in this document.

b. In-Service Maintenance of Tire-Wheel Assembly.

(1) Inflation Pressure Control. Tire pressure should be checked daily using a calibrated gauge whose scale is suited to the pressure range that is being monitored. The pressure gauge measurement accuracy should be within ± 2 percent for the entire tire operating pressure range.

NOTE: Accurately maintaining the correct inflation pressure is the single most effective task in the preventive maintenance regimen for safe tire operations!

(2) In-Service Inflation Control. Pressure checks are most meaningful on “cold” assemblies. “Cold” assemblies are those that are at ambient temperature, or that have been at rest for at least 2 hours since their last service. When possible, daily pressure checks should be done on “cold” assemblies.

(3) Service Pressure. Service pressure is the inflation pressure needed to support the maximum operating load for a wheel position. Service pressure is measured with the assembly under load. When pressure testing a loaded assembly, inflate and maintain mounted tires with nitrogen. The gauge pressure should indicate a range between 100 percent and 105 percent of the specified service pressure, provided that the rated pressure of the tire and the wheel’s TSO qualification pressure is not exceeded.

(4) Reinflation.

(a) Any assembly found to be between 90 percent and 100 percent of the loaded service pressure should be reinflated to the specified service pressure.

(b) Any assembly discovered to have been operating at less than 90 percent of the minimum loaded service pressure should be removed from service.

(c) Any assembly that was operated at less than 80 percent of the minimum loaded service pressure and its axle-mate should be removed from service.

(d) If the user does not scrap tires on site, tires removed from service should be returned to a full service repair facility with a description of the reason for removal as described in subparagraph [7b\(7\)\(c\)3](#).

(5) Tire Operating Environment. Since aircraft tires operate at high loads and inflation pressures, they can be easily damaged when rolled over hard objects that protrude above a paved surface. Tire damage created by these objects can vary from a superficial mark to a serious defect. Penetration into the casing can result in tread loss during operations. Total penetration will result in loss of inflation integrity and over-deflection of the tire. Tires should be inspected after each duty cycle. When this is impractical, tires should be inspected as soon as possible, such as at the next crew change. At a minimum, tires should be inspected daily.

NOTE: Foreign object damage (FOD) is the most common cause of premature tire removals. The operator should clean all loading areas using the following schedule:

Recommended Housekeeping at Loading Areas (areas beneath and adjacent to aircraft)
1) Perform daily walk around inspection and pickup.
2) Mechanically sweep the entire area every 3 days.

(6) Operational Practices (Operator Flight and Ground Crews). While on the ground, flightcrews and ground handling crews can have a substantial influence on the safe performance of aircraft tires.

(a) Turns.

1. Aircraft are capable of being maneuvered through tight turns that place high lateral loads on tires. When subjected to such conditions, the tire can experience external damage to the tread or sidewall, internal damage to the casing structure, or bead unseating with consequent pressure loss.

2. Ground maneuvers should be made at the largest feasible turn radius when possible. For nose landing gear tires, the aircraft should begin rolling with the tires aligned in a straight-ahead position before the turn maneuver is initiated. The minimum turn radius should still allow the tire closest to the center of the turn to continue rolling.

(b) Temperature. Aircraft tires generate internal heat during normal operations. Under high aircraft loads (particularly under sideloading conditions), heat buildup is accelerated by excessive taxi speed and/or excessive taxi distances. Tire integrity and reliability may be compromised when a combination of these conditions occurs.

(7) In-Service Inspections (Operator).

(a) Tread Damage Removal Recommendations. Tires that exhibit any of the following characteristics symptomatic of damage should be removed from service:

1. Cracking and/or cutting in a tread groove that is undercutting material adjacent to the crack or cutting that has lifted or can be lifted.

NOTE: Do not probe cuts or embedded FOD when the tire is inflated.

2. Undercutting in a tread rib.

3. Transverse cracking in the tread that is visible at the surface and shows progression along an angular path down into the rubber.

(b) General Tire Removal Recommendations. Tires with any of the following conditions should be removed from service:

1. Sidewall cuts that penetrate the outermost structural ply.

2. Internal separations characterized by bulges or distortions in the tread casing or sidewalls.

3. Heat or slippage evidenced by reverted or charred rubber above the wheel flange.
4. Tires worn or flat-spotted to the outermost casing ply (bias) or outermost belt (radial).

(c) Removal Recommendations for Atypical Service Events. Tires that have been subjected to unusual service events, such as high energy rejected takeoffs or high energy overspeed landings (where thermal fuse plugs have released), should be removed and scrapped. Those tires that remain inflated should be removed and returned to a full service tire supplier with a description of the reason for removal, as described in subparagraphs 7b(7)(c)1 and 7b(7)(c)3.

1. **Post-Removal Tire Inspection.** Tires removed from service before tread wearout should have the damaged areas marked prior to deflation. Assemblies removed early for pressure loss should be tested before the tire is de-mounted. Each low pressure assembly should be reinflated in a safety cage to a pressure not to exceed 50 percent of the service pressure and the cause of the pressure loss determined.

2. **De-Mounting Tires from Wheels.** Tires should be completely deflated before removal from the rim. Deflate the tire by removing the valve cap and valve core, pointing the venting pressure in a direction that will cause no harm if ice forms in the gas stream.

3. **Early Removal Documentation.** Tires removed for other than normal wear should have the reason for removal specified and included in the documentation accompanying each tire when it is returned to its supplier. Further, these tires should bear some previously agreed upon markings to assist in its final disposition.

4. **Tire Manufacturer's Inspection Criteria.** The operator should comply with tire inspection requirements specified in the tire manufacturer's maintenance manual, and consult the tire inspection advice set forth in this document.

8. TIRE ENVIRONMENT/AIRPORT SURFACES. Aircraft tires can be easily damaged when rolled over hard objects that protrude above a paved surface since they operate at high loads and inflation pressures. Tire damage created by these objects can vary from a superficial mark to a serious defect. Penetration into the casing could result in tread loss during operations. Total penetration will result in loss of inflation integrity and over-deflection of the tire.

NOTE: FOD is the most common cause of premature tire removals. The airport authority should clean all areas of responsibility using the following schedule:

Recommended Housekeeping of Taxiways, Runways, and Ramp Areas (when no construction is taking place)*
1) Perform daily inspection and pickup.
2) Perform mechanical sweeps every 7 days.

*During periods of construction, affected areas should receive continuous monitoring and should be mechanically swept daily.

9. AC FEEDBACK FORM. For your convenience, the AC Feedback Form is the last page of this AC. Note any deficiencies found, clarifications needed, or suggested improvements regarding the contents of this AC on the Feedback Form.

APPENDIX 1. GLOSSARY OF TIRE TERMS

The following is a list of common tire terms. Glossaries of other tire terms appear in AC [145-4](#) and in [TSO-C62](#).

Glossary of Tire Terms	
Bead	Zones that are in contact with the rim areas of the wheel, or the coils of steel wire that provide anchors for the plies.
Bias Tire	A pneumatic tire in which the ply cords extend to the beads and are laid at alternate angles substantially less than 90 degrees to the centerline of the tread.
Casing	The structural part of a tire.
Deflection	The ratio (in percent) of the deflected distance between the rim and tread to the undeflected distance.
Flatspotting	A localized accelerated wear condition associated with landings; or A temporary or permanent “out-of-round” condition resulting from a loaded hot tire having not rotated while cooling to the ambient temperature. This condition is most prevalent on bias nylon tires due to the “plastic memory” of the nylon cords.
Foreign Object Damage (FOD)	Material that, if left on the runway, taxiway or ramp, that could cause damage to tires, engines, or other aircraft structures; or Damage resulting from contact with foreign objects.
Innerliner	The integral rubber lining of a tubeless tire that is engineered to prevent the diffusion of the inflation gas into the casing.
Innertube	A gas-tight rubber device placed inside a tube-type tire casing for the purpose of containing the inflation gas. It is provided with an integral valve assembly.
Radial Tire	A pneumatic tire in which the ply cords extend to the beads and are laid substantially at 90 degrees to the centerline of the tire. Additional stabilization is provided by essentially inextensible belting in the tread area.

Glossary of Tire Terms	
Safety Cage	A reinforced structure that has been specifically designed to protect service personnel from the effects of any explosive event that may occur during the pressurization of a tire/wheel assembly.
Separation	Failure of adhesion between components or tearing within a single tire component.
Service Pressure	The inflation pressure needed to support the maximum operating load for a wheel position. Service pressure is measured with the assembly under load.
Sidewall Vents	Specific perforations in the lower sidewalls of tubeless tires, usually located above the rim centering rib, and defined by paint marks. These perforations release detrimental internal casing pressure.
Sidewall	The rubber side area of the tire located between the shoulder and the beads that covers the underlying structure and protects the carcass from damage.
Tire (Pneumatic)	A complex engineered structure made of rubber and cord (of textiles or steel) that provide a resilient protective enclosure for the inflating gas.
Tire Pressure Indicating System (Installed on an Aircraft)	A system installed on an aircraft used for tire pressure checks.
Transverse Crack	A crack at an angle that is not parallel to the principle direction of the outer ply, breaker, or belt.
Tread	The expendable rubber-wearing surface of any pneumatic tire. It contains the groove pattern designed to facilitate water removal from the contact patch, and may, or may not, possess integral fabric materials.
Tube	A gas-tight rubber device placed inside tube-type tire casings for the purpose of containing the inflation gas. It is provided with an integral valve assembly.
Tube-Type Tires	Tires requiring tubes for inflation retention.
Tubeless Tires	Tires not requiring tubes. These tires are constructed with an innerliner.
Undercutting	A rubber fracture that progresses from the tread surface, or in a groove, in a direction parallel to the ply structure.

Advisory Circular Feedback Form

If you find an error in this AC, have recommendations for improving it, or have suggestions for new items/subjects to be added, you may let us know by contacting the Flight Standards Directives Management Officer at 9-AWA-AFB-120-Directives@faa.gov.

Subject: AC 20-97B CHG 1, Aircraft Tire Maintenance and Operational Practices

Date: _____

Please check all appropriate line items:

An error (procedural or typographical) has been noted in paragraph _____
on page _____.

Recommend paragraph _____ on page _____ be changed as follows:

In a future change to this AC, please cover the following subject:
(Briefly describe what you want added.)

Other comments:

I would like to discuss the above. Please contact me.

Submitted by: _____

Date: _____