

Alaska State Legislature

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REPRESENTATIVE JOHN HARRIS

Sponsor Statement

HB322, Relating to Winter Tires

Bill Summary

House Bill 322 places a requirement into state law for vehicles on Alaska's roads to have dependable and safe tires during the harshest months of winter.

Between December 15th and March 15th, all motor vehicles would be required to either have studded tires or tires bearing the mountain snowflake symbol. A provision is included in the bill to allow the Department of Transportation and Public Facilities to determine other tires that are commensurate in performance for winter driving conditions.

The Department would also be required to undertake an education campaign to notify the public about the requirements established by this bill.

An effective date of December 15, 2011 is in the bill. This is intended to provide a one-year period for vehicle owners to obtain tires that will comply with the new law.

Bill Background

Following a series of horrific vehicle accidents on a stretch of highway in the Canadian Rockies, the U.S. Rubber Manufacturers Association (RMA) and the Rubber Association of Canada (RAC) got together and agreed on a performance based standard for passenger and light truck tires. The new standard helps ensure that drivers can easily identify tires that provide a higher level of snow traction.

The mountain snowflake symbol (see below) was developed to show that tires meet this new standard. Branded on the tire's sidewall, the symbol identifies tires that met the required performance in snow testing.



Tires marked "M + S" (Mud and Snow), or "all season" tires that do not have the mountain snowflake symbol may provide safe performance in most weather conditions, but are not designed for snow and ice-covered roads. At temperatures below 45°F, standard tires begin to lose elasticity, resulting in reduced traction. Winter tires retain their elasticity to grip at much lower temperatures.