

A Minute For Safety – Interpreting motorcycle manufacture date codes

Motorcycle tires are one of the most critical safety components on your bike, yet many riders overlook a key detail: the tire date code. Understanding how to read it can help you avoid riding on aged, potentially unsafe rubber.

Motorcycle tire date codes are part of the DOT (Department of Transportation) marking molded into the sidewall. Look for the letters “DOT” followed by a series of numbers and letters. The final four digits indicate the week and year the tire was manufactured. For example, a code ending in “2319” means the tire was produced in the 23rd week of 2019.

Why does this matter? Rubber compounds degrade over time due to heat, UV exposure, ozone, and normal environmental conditions—even if the tire has never been mounted. As tires age, they can harden, reducing grip and increasing stopping distance. Cracking in the sidewall or tread may also develop.

Most manufacturers recommend replacing motorcycle tires at six years from the date of manufacture, regardless of tread depth. Some suggest absolute replacement at ten years, even if the tire appears serviceable. Always check the specific guidance from your tire manufacturer.

When purchasing new tires, verify the date code before installation. A “new” tire may have been sitting in storage for several years. During routine maintenance or pre-ride inspections, take a moment to confirm your tire age.

Interpreting tire date codes is simple, takes only seconds, and can significantly enhance rider safety. Fresh, properly maintained tires provide the traction and confidence every motorcyclist depends on.

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