The 2011 study, which compared Quebec road accident statistics before and after winter tire use became required, shows that in the past two winters there has been a five per cent reduction in road-accident injuries that can be directly attributed to winter tire use. The research concludes that winter tires prevent about 575 road-accident injuries per winter in Quebec. The study also found that vehicle accidents resulting in death or serious injury declined by three per cent.

"When people ride on winter tires, road-accident injuries decrease," says Glenn Maidment, president of the Rubber Association of Canada (RAC), which represents tire makers. "Considering that only 51 per cent of Canadian motorists use winter tires, the Quebec experience should give us all pause for thought. There now can be absolutely no doubt that winter tires offer the safest winter driving experience."

This fall tire makers are urging Canadian drivers to carefully consider whether winter tires are right for them and to make an educated choice. To help motorists make the right decision for their driving patterns, the industry is offering drivers a wealth of information about the performance advantages of winter tires at its website, betiresmart.

What motorists may not know is that today's high-tech winter tires offer far more than better traction on snow, ice or slush covered roadways. The rubber compounds used in today's sophisticated winter tires deliver better grip in all cold weather driving conditions- including dry pavement – because these compounds maintain their elasticity even at temperatures below -30C. The result is a dramatic improvement in driver control and traction in all winter driving conditions, particularly when cornering or braking.

Drivers who choose to roll on winter tires will notice the difference in traction when the temperature falls below 7C, or as soon as they can see their breath.

Traditionally, many drivers, particularly those who live in cities or towns where the streets are cleared regularly, have opted for all-season tires to avoid the bi-annual tire changeover. All-season tires can provide safe all-weather performance, but winter tires deliver up to 50 per cent more winter traction.

"The most common objection to winter tires is cost," says Maidment. "But that concern is tempered by the fact that using winter tires prolongs the life of a vehicle's conventional summer tires, which over time saves money. Given the performance and safety advantages, winter tires should be considered a driving essential from December to April."

When buying winter tires, motorists should look for the mountain snowflake symbol on the sidewall. Tires with this symbol meet or exceed tire industry snow traction requirements.

Proper tire maintenance and inflation are also important contributors to safe winter driving.

Motorists should remember that excessive tread wear can diminish traction and, as a result, tread depth should always be checked at the start of the winter driving season. Drivers who are unsure if their tires are overly worn should consult

Proper tire inflation is another winter driving essential. Tires that are under-or-over inflated have a smaller footprint on the road surface, which lessens their grip. The result is reduced stopping and handling capabilities and wasted fuel.

Tire inflation pressure can drop quickly during cold snaps. Every 5C change results in about one psi change in

pressure, so a temperature drop of 15C would result in 10 per cent or three psi under-inflation. During winter, tire makers recommend measuring tire inflation frequently using a reliable tire gauge to ensure tires are properly in-Learn more about winter tires by visiting betiresmart. flated to the vehicle manufacturer's recommendation.

—Source: The Rubber Association of Canada

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