

Goodyear winter tests its snow tires in Florida

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Where does a tire company go to test snow tires in late summer?

Why, Florida naturally!

Yeah, it sounds unlikely but sometimes a tire's ability to perform in the harshest snow and ice conditions can be determined in a setting surrounded by white sand beaches, swaying palm trees and brilliant sunshine.

Goodyear recently invited journalists to experience winter tire testing on Florida's Panhandle, near the Gulf of Mexico where severe winter conditions can be recreated inside the McKinley Climatic Laboratory, an immense scientific building located within the gates of

Eglin Air Force Base.

Goodyear engineers and test personnel traveled here to test tires in the world's largest climatic chamber where they have the capability to control freezing temperatures and to create a snow depth suitable for the extensive testing process that all of the company's tires must complete.

"In essence, we put our tires through the types of conditions during the development and testing phases that any consumer may face when that tire is mounted to a vehicle in the real world," said Mike Wilps, Goodyear's manager of tire evaluation.

The climatic chamber at Eglin AFB, occasionally used by Goodyear for tire testing, is large enough to house aircraft such as a Boeing 747 or a military C-5



Winter tire testing in Florida, inside the McKinley Climatic Laboratory, an immense scientific building that can hold a 747 and test temperatures ranging from -65F to +165F. The building is located within the gates of Eglin Air Force Base in Florida.

transport plane, and it has the capability to reach temperature extremes of - 65 F to +165 F. Weather conditions such as snow, ice, freezing rain, extreme humidity, strong winds and blowing dust can also be created in a controlled test environment.

And Goodyear and Eglin personnel can use snowmaking equipment inside the McKinley lab to recreate the winter conditions facing motorists in the northern U.S. and Canada.

Changes in temperature and the structure of various road surfaces can make the development of new tires a formidable challenge, according to Wilps. That is one reason Goodyear recently introduced the Ultra Grip Ice WRT winter tire, with tread designs for both SUVs and light-trucks.

The tire features Winter Reactive Technology, a combination of innovative tire features that work together to help provide a balance of starting, stopping and turning traction to help drivers react to changing winter road conditions.

The tire features 2D blades in the center zone for hardworking biting edges for enhanced starting and stopping power on snow and ice. Goodyear's 3D TredLock Technology blades in the shoulder zone of the tire lock together to form large outer tread blocks for confident winter grip and handling in sweeping turns.

Further elements of Winter Reactive Technology include a directional tread design and a Winter Grip Compound. The Ultra Grip Ice WRT is comprised of two distinctive tread designs—one for light-truck applications, and one for SUV/crossover vehicle applications.

The new tire line is offered in 16 popular sizes. 10 passenger sizes in S speed rating and standard load rating, and six LT sizes in Q speed rating and E load rating. Popular vehicle applications include Acura MDX, Jeep Grand Cherokee, Toyota 4Runner, Honda Pilot, Toyota Highlander, Nissan Pathfinder, Hyundai Santa Fe, Ford 150, Ford F250 Super Duty, Ford Expedition, Jeep Wrangler, Dodge Ram, GMC Yukon and Chevrolet Suburban.

"To get the best traction and gripping power on ice and snow, you can't beat a true winter tire," said Gary Medalis, Goodyear brand general manager. "Goodyear's Ultra Grip family of winter tires are worth a look for many drivers. After all, winter is just around the corner."

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