

# OK Tire rolls into town

BY FREE PRESS STAFF

After 21 years in the collision business, Roger and Rita Beaulieu, the owners of Beau's Collision, have opened OK Tire and Auto Service next to their existing business on Talbot Street.

The new business was opened in April.

They now offer the only tire showroom in town.

"The reason we wanted to sell tires is because we have a full-service department, body shop and towing," Roger said. "To finish it off, we figured, we have an opportunity here. Instead of having customers go out of town for tires, we want to keep them here."

The 450-square-foot showroom, a second aspect to the business, was completed in July. Nine brands of tires are showcased, and as of this week, the inventory includes 250 sets.

The Beaulieus say they will be operating OK Tire and Auto Service with the same crew behind Beau's Collision, but as a separate business.

"There's no different tactics or anything, it's the same service we offered before," Roger said. "We're just dividing the company between Beau's Collision and OK Tire and Auto Service."

The auto service includes brakes, steering, alignments, suspension, tire rotation, exhaust, and mechanical repairs.



**TIRE BUSINESS ROLLS INTO TOWN** – Roger and Rita Beaulieu stand in the recently constructed OK Tire showroom, Aug. 31. The owners of Beau's Collision opened an OK Tire and Auto Service on Talbot Street in an effort keep Essex customers from going out of town to purchase tires.

Roger said before deciding to open the new outlet, he and Rita shopped around for a company with good products, guarantees and a national warranty.

"We also wanted to join a franchise that had a good name," Rita added. "Working with OK Tire, I think we're going to get much better ideas than we have had in the past because they provide all kinds of support and different ideas."

O.K. Tire Stores Inc. was formed in 1953 and has grown to more than 260 locations across Canada.

"They're big, but they want to work with independent people like us," Roger

said. "I think the biggest thing that we're going to get out of this is support and product. It will compliment our existing business."

The Beaulieus said they knew there was a local demand for tires because of what they would see and hear from car owners when they brought their vehicles in to be repaired at the collision shop.

Although Beau's Collision sold tires prior to opening the new outlet, they were purchased from an independent supplier and the Beaulieus wanted to be able to supply a larger customer base with a broader variety of products.

# Small Business 101

## What to do when it all goes wrong

The recent anniversary of Hurricane Katrina should remind business owners to prepare a disaster plan. Thankfully, few of us will ever face the kind of destruction seen in New Orleans, but there's a reasonable chance that our businesses will be affected by weather, fire or illness at some point. Here are some tips on how to minimize the damage.

### Weather and Fire

If a major storm or a flood hits your area, the building that houses your business could be damaged. While you and your staff may be very safety conscious, fire can spread to your building from a neighbouring property. Make sure you have appropriate insurance coverage, but also try to prevent damage:

- Keep up with repairs to your building. If you rent, work with your landlord to keep the building in good condition.

- Avoid keeping company records or inventory in the basement, where it could be damaged by flooding – or a backed-up sewer pipe.

- Consider investing in a

generator, even if it's just to keep the building heated and prevent burst water pipes if you lose power in winter.

- Perform regular backups of your computer files.

- Keep your most important documents off-site, for example, at your lawyer's office. If you have a safe, make sure it's fireproof.

- Have fire extinguishers in convenient places and have them checked annually.

- Tidy up. Remove clutter that could stop people from leaving quickly in case of an emergency. Unnecessary junk may also help fuel a fire.

- Store any flammable materials according to safety codes and be sure that employees have been trained in safe handling techniques.

### Illness

While we may not think of illness or injury as a "disaster", having the owner out of commission can be as devastating as having the building burn down:

- Prepare a written plan, discuss it with your senior staff, and file it in a safe

place. The goal is to have the business operate as normally as possible without you – just like when you go on vacation.

- Designate someone to take over responsibilities such as meeting with clients until you get back.

- Your plan should include giving Power of Attorney to a trusted person who can make legal and financial decisions in your absence. See a lawyer to draw up a Power of Attorney that meets your needs.

- Make sure that you have disability and business overhead insurance and review it yearly.

No matter what disaster has happened, be honest with your customers, suppliers and financial institution. Most will understand and they may be more flexible if they know what your situation is.

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