

New skidsteer tyre range from Bridgestone

Bridgestone Earthmover Tyres has recently released a new range of skidsteer tyres, the Firestone Duraforce line.

Developed for use in the harshest conditions, the Duraforce range features a wide, deep tread, with increased tread volume, thicker side protection, stronger casing construction and "ultra secure" bead construction.

These features result in improved wear resistance and durability, increased puncture resistance, better resistance to side damage and better rim protection.

Benefits include extended tyre life compared with conventional skidsteer tyres, better traction,



particularly in slippery underfoot conditions, reduced cost of operation and increased operator comfort.

Two styles are available in the Duraforce range, the DT (deep tread), designed for use in slippery, muddy or soft underfoot conditions, such as most earthmoving applications, and the ND (non-directional), designed for use on harder or paved surfaces.

DT tyres are available in 10-16.5PR and 12-16.5PR sizes, while ND tyres are available in 355/70D17.5, 385/65D19.5 and 445/65D19.5 sizes.

According to Mick Ryan, Bridgestone Earthmover Tyres' executive manager, diversified products, the new Firestone Duraforce range will provide longevity and performance benefits compared with alternative tyres.

"Firestone is one of the world's oldest manufacturers of small industrial and earthmoving tyres, and spends more on R&D in this market than any other supplier," he said.

"Firestone's commitment to quality control and industry-leading design means that customers can be assured of maximum tyre life compared with other brands available, with resulting performance benefits and lower operating costs."

Bridgestone Earthmover Tyres has recently been appointed exclusive Australian distributor for the Firestone earthmover and industrial tyre range.

As a result of this development, it is now selling direct to end users through its Australian network of branch outlets and dealers, as well as to equipment dealers.

In addition to the new Duraforce skidsteer range, it also sells the long-standing Firestone ATU range of backhoe/loader tyres.



Peter Love, Executive Manager, NSW and Northern Territory.

Peter Love takes on full NSW and NT role

Peter Love, a 24-year veteran with Bridgestone Earthmover Tyres, has been appointed executive manager, NSW and Northern Territory, with his role expanding to cover all of Bridgestone's NSW and NT operations.

"This change gives our customers ready access to senior management within the company and allows us to better utilise the strengths of our Sydney and Mt Thorley operations," said Peter.

BRIDGESTONE

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For further information on any of the products or services covered in *IMPRINT*, please contact us at Bridgestone Earthmover Tyres, or your nearest Bridgestone outlet.

IMPRINT

SPRING 2004

Tyre industry issues: from the Managing Director's desk

Welcome to the Spring 2004 edition of Imprint magazine!

As Bridgestone Earthmover Tyres' new managing director, this is an opportunity for me to comment on some of the issues facing this market and our customers.

Firstly, I would like to look at what is happening globally.

With rising mineral prices, mining companies around the world are increasing their production volumes. The usage of existing machines has increased and machines that were previously parked-up are being put back to work.

OEMs have also increased new machine production to full capacity. As a result, the demand for large and giant off-road tyres is surging internationally.

Demand for small and medium off-road tyres has also surged, due to increased activity of the construction and quarry industries. Again, OEMs' machine production in this category is also running to full capacity.

Bridgestone is increasing production as much as possible and running at full capacity every month in order to meet this increased demand for all types of off-road tyres.

However, to our regret, the rate of demand increase is currently much higher than the production increases we have so far achieved.

Despite these issues, customer satisfaction remains the aim of Bridgestone Earthmover Tyres.

As supply shortages are the biggest issue for the moment, we are trying to maximise our deliveries to customers by improving our

inventory and production order management.

For example, we are moving inventory between branches, all over Australia, which is allowing us to run at very low but efficient inventory levels.

We are also working hard to provide full customer satisfaction through technical support, tyre maintenance and safety training.

Although these are some difficult issues for both ourselves and our customers, we are always challenging ourselves to find new ways to overcome these difficulties.

Our aim is to continue realising high-levels of customer satisfaction, because that is the reason why we are here.

Steve Niho,
Managing Director



Steve Niho, Bridgestone Earthmover Tyres' new Managing Director.

New MD for Bridgestone EM Tyres

Steve Niho has been appointed Bridgestone Earthmover Tyres Pty Ltd's new Australian managing director.

Steve joined Bridgestone Corporation in Japan (BSJ) in 1983, working in the shipping section handling logistics and billing of Bridgestone products being exported.

After working in BSJ's European sales section, in 1989 he moved to the newly formed Off-Road Tyre sales department in 1989.

From 1991 to 1997, Steve worked for Bridgestone/Firestone Europe in Belgium, looking after the Off-Road Tyre business in all European countries. He was the first Bridgestone employee specifically assigned to this business in Europe.

In 1997, he returned to BSJ's O-R Tyre sales department in charge of long-term sales/production planning and sales to Asia, Middle East, Russia, Oceania, North America and South America, before taking up his current position.



A strong world commodities market, driven by demand from China, is resulting in high levels of activity in the mining sector globally.

Managing tyre supply issues

Bruce Connor, Bridgestone Earthmover Tyres' executive manager marketing, looks at the current tyre supply problems, and ways of managing the issues arising from this.

There has been considerable publicity in recent months given to the global off-road tyre supply issues, with tyre supply likely to be tight for at least the next 12-18 months.

This issue affects Bridgestone and all its competitors, and has resulted from a number of factors. These include:

- The booming Chinese economy, which is absorbing vast numbers of off-road tyres due to its massive infrastructure investment program.
- A major rise in exports of raw materials, including coal and iron ore, to China, resulting in unprecedented demand for large rubber-tyre mining equipment, such as dump trucks and large wheel loaders
- Global rubber shortages and rising rubber prices
- Some reduction of production capacity at our main truck tyre factory in Japan as a result of a large fire late last year; because of this, production at other factories has had to be diverted to allow continuing supplies of all tyre types
- The enormous infrastructure investment required to manufacture large off-road tyres, which then takes some time to put in place.

The end result is that off-road tyre supplies are extremely tight, particularly at the top end, but also in medium to large sized machines, including mining and quarry trucks, mid to large wheel loaders, graders and scrapers.

In some instances, fleet owners are now looking at the prospect of



Bruce Connor, Executive Manager, Marketing.

having to stand some equipment down.

Fortunately, there are a number of steps customers can take to manage this tyre supply issue. These include:

- Long-term, accurate forecasts
- Improving tyre management programs to extend tyre life
- Tyre repair and refurbishment
- Entering into tyre-supply contracts.

Forecasting

From a tyre manufacturer's point of view, we are asking customers for clear, accurate forecasts of their requirements – and the longer, the better.

In normal circumstances, our tyre production cycle is typically 90 days from order to delivery.

However, at present, we are talking 150 days and longer. If we can get an indication of a customer's requirements 12 months out, then we can work towards that.

The days when a customer could ring up and say "I need 30 tyres next week" are over.

Tyre management programs

Implementing effective tyre management programs to extend tyre life must be a key weapon in dealing with supply issues.

The first step here must be improving operating conditions so that tyre wear and damage is minimised, and ensuring maximum tyre life is achieved.

This has always been an important factor in keeping operating costs down, but it is even more important now with the current tyre supply issue.

Actions which will help extend tyre life include:

- Keeping loading areas clean and free of spilled rocks,

Managing tyre supply issues continued

- Maintaining flat floors with no puddles to hide rocks which can puncture tyres easily
- Properly maintaining haul roads
- Clearing spillages quickly
- Strict adherence to tyre rotation schedules, especially in the case of giant loaders where there are considerably higher loadings on the front tyres than the rear ones
- Ensuring operating practices are designed to minimise tyre wear.

Tyre repair

Repair and refurbishment of tyres is another option that is becoming more popular, particularly with the current supply issues.

While severe cut damage may make a tyre irreparable, even fairly significant structural damage to a tyre can be repaired.

Bridgestone currently has a number of facilities in Queensland and Western Australia capable of repairing tyres that in times of more ready supply may have been discarded.

Supply contracts

Putting it brutally, the priority customers for tyre suppliers under the current situation will be major customers and those with supply contracts.

All manufacturers will be doing everything possible to ensure contracted customers have their requirements met; unfortunately, others will just have to accept what is available, when it is available.

It is not too late to look at entering into a supply contract – but you will find suppliers will be looking for accurate forecasts at least 12 months out.



Good site management practices, including ensuring loading and haulage areas are kept smooth and clean, will assist greatly in prolonging tyre life.

How long?

So how long is this supply issue likely to last?

We are not likely to see any significant relief until late 2005 or even 2006.

As already mentioned, the main factor is the booming Chinese economy. While economists are telling us that demand will stabilise, and that current growth rates are unsustainable, the fact is we are looking at the largest infrastructure boom in world history.

We simply don't know when it will slow down.

However, production from a major upgrade to one of Bridgestone off-road tyre factories will come onstream in Japan in mid-2005, and that will result in a considerable increase in our capacity.

The important thing is to be aware that the typical off-the-shelf tyre availability which the industry has been used to for the past decade or so has ended, and that you need to manage your tyre needs accordingly.

Bridgestone tracks give great life

Sydney-based owner-operator Mick Harpley, of MPJ Excavations, has found the use of replacement Bridgestone rubber tracks is giving him very good track life on his IHI 40JX mini excavator.

Mick bought his 40JX used with 1500 hours on it.

"It came with a set of Bridgestone rubber tracks, I had to replace the track on one side after 3000 hours but the other lasted 5500 hours. That's very good life for these kinds of track in the work I do," he said.

"Being a small contractor I am totally reliant on my machine. It's my business so I can't afford for anything to go wrong, including the rubber tracks I get around on."

"It's common sense with rubber tracks: they'll last if you look after them, but if you race around on hammered concrete they'll fall apart in no time," said Mick.

"I'm mainly involved in roadworks which involves plenty of travelling in the machine and the Bridgestones have held up really well.

"When they're new, all rubber tracks look the same, but get a few operating hours under your belt and you can soon see the difference in quality.

"The Bridgestone's really do last and it's good to know they are now available as replacement parts," he said.



Owner operator Mick Harpley has fitted Bridgestone replacement rubber tracks on his IHI 40JX mini excavator.