

EMERGENCY VEHICLES ON **RETREADS?**



With the ***health and safety*** of a quarter million residents as their ***first priority***, city officials in Shreveport, Louisiana, want to be absolutely certain that their emergency vehicles are running on the ***safest possible tires***.

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With over 15 years of experience on retreads, Chief of Maintenance Henry Simons of the Shreveport Fire Department has become a strong advocate of running his fire trucks and emergency medical units on Bandag® retreads.

Simons said, “I wasn’t always in favor of putting retreads on emergency vehicles. In 1991, I was part of the maintenance team mandated to use retreads. That mandate came from our fire chief, so it was an order we had to obey. Those of us on the maintenance team shared all of the negative misconceptions about retreads that keep a lot of municipalities from enjoying the savings. After about a year or two of experience with retreads, we learned they really do work.”

Chief Simons continued, “Many of us feared the tread would peel off during an emergency run when the vehicles travel at a high rate speed. That has never happened in the 15 years we have been saving the Shreveport taxpayers substantial dollars by using retreads. We did have the tread and belt package peel off of a new tire that had never been retreaded during one of our emergency runs. That apparently happened as a result of a rapid loss of air pressure associated with a tire injury.”

When the City of Shreveport started using retreads in 1991, it was with a competitive brand product. Chief Simons said, “We switched to

Southern Tire Mart and Bandag in 1997 because of their service capabilities.”

The Shreveport Fire Department has 27 pumper trucks, eight aerial trucks, 15 medic units and eight to 10 support vehicles, all equipped with retreads. Those vehicles operate out of 21 different fire stations. Because prompt arrival at an emergency is critical, the equipment is spread throughout the city for quick response purposes.

Having the equipment in many different locations presents special equipment service challenges. David Johnson, a Commercial Sales Representative for Southern Tire Mart, makes sure that Shreveport’s emergency vehicles have the highest priority when a call for service is issued. He said, “We are committed to providing the Fire Department and the citizens of Shreveport with the best possible vehicle uptime.”

Chief Simons said, “David keeps us on the cutting edge of tire technology. Recently he moved our fire truck fleet to Bandag’s BDV tread design. We continue to use a Bandag rib design on the 19.5 tires used on our medic trucks.”

In both cases Chief Simons has found the Bandag® retreads outperform new tires. He said, “Because our trucks travel at a high rate of speed as they answer emergency calls, the torque and jackrabbit type starts take their toll on tread wear.

We average between 12,000 and 14,000 miles on a new tire. At half the cost, our Bandag® retreads almost double that wear performance, delivering an average of 22,000 miles.”

Casings are retreaded twice for the medic units and up to three times for the fire trucks.

Southern Tire Mart provides the city with both the new tires and retreads run in the fleet. Johnson said, “We closely track the performance of those tires and have found the city actually has less problems with the retreads. The fact that our retread plant is ISO certified probably helps account for that favorable retread performance. We also use the Bandag 7400 INSIGHT® Casing Analyzer with shearographic technology to check every casing we put on an emergency vehicle.”

With the reliability and performance of retreads combined with the cost savings, Chief Simons finds it hard to believe that there are still skeptics. He said, “Recently I attended a national conference for emergency vehicle maintenance officials. There were about 350 in the audience. When we were asked who used retreads only eight or 10 hands went up.”

He concluded, “We have over 15 years of experience with retreads. We can document they are every bit as safe as a new tire and wear performance exceeds a new tire at a fraction of the cost.”

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