



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
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Kal Tire & Amber Balcaen launch '7 Degree Switch' campaign

Winnipeg's Amber Balcaen, the first Canadian woman to win a NASCAR-sanctioned race, helps dispel dangerous winter tire myths.

VERNON, BC—The 'buckle up' campaign got motorists wearing seatbelts and the 'leave the phone alone' campaign advised drivers to forgo talking and texting. [Kal Tire](#) now launches the '7 Degree Switch' campaign in hopes of getting drivers to heed the message of Canadian pro race car driver Amber Balcaen and switch to winter tires at +7C—the point at which all-season tires begin to lose traction.

"As a professional driver, I know my experience can only get me so far, especially in rough and unpredictable winter conditions off the track. It's my tires that let my vehicle stick to the road and brake in time," says Amber Balcaen. In 2016, she became the first Canadian woman to win a NASCAR-sanctioned race in the US and has since won another in 2017. She is a spokesperson for Kal Tire's '7 Degree Switch' campaign, which likens the dangers of driving on all-season tires in winter conditions to driving while texting or without wearing a seatbelt. "Having grown up in Winnipeg and experienced the worst of Canadian winters, I know what happens when you've got the wrong tires in winter, so we're saying, 'Don't be that guy!'"

While those in the tire industry have long understood all-seasons can't perform well below +7C, which is why Kal Tire has named them 3-season tires, Kal Tire is hoping that fact becomes common knowledge for drivers. To provide proof, Kal Tire has invested in extensive independent tire testing to evaluate the performance of both new and worn 3-season, all-weather and winter tires in Canadian winter conditions. The evidence has been both surprising and significant: from 50 km/h, passenger winter tires stopped over 6 metres shorter on loose snow than 3-season tires and nearly 9 m shorter on icy conditions at 30 km/h.

"Having the right tires on your vehicle as temperatures fall below +7C is critical. All it takes is one episode of cold weather or snowfall to see a dramatic decrease in your tires' braking and cornering capabilities," says Geoff Wiebe, tire expert with Kal Tire, adding winters like last year show Mother Nature can be bizarre and unpredictable in Canada.

"In the end, the tires you choose affect everyone on the road," says Wiebe. "Despite the evidence, some people still think 3-seasons are acceptable in the winter. We hope that by dispelling some of the most widely held winter tire myths that we can get people into the habit of choosing a tire that's safe for winter, and improve road safety for all of us."

TOP 3 WINTER TIRE MYTHS

MYTH #1: ALL-SEASONS ARE SAFE FOR ALL SEASONS

"We still hear from customers on the coast or in cities like Toronto who really don't think they need winter tires because they don't get a lot of snow," says Wiebe. "But it's not about the snow. It's about the temperature."

Three-season tires contain less natural rubber, so they stiffen once temperatures are consistently below +7C. Winter tires, on the other hand, stay flexible for optimal grip and braking at temperatures below +7C, and all-weather tires, which bear the severe service winter tire symbol, are made with a special compound to stay flexible above *and* below +7C, giving drivers in mild and urban regions a safe year-round alternative.

According to Transport Canada, "At temperatures below +7C, all-season and summer tires begin to lose elasticity, resulting in reduced traction." ¹⁾

MYTH #2: M+S (MUD AND SNOW) TIRES ARE FINE FOR WINTER DRIVING

M+S tires are all-season tires. What makes them different from a summer tire is they have more space between tread blocks (a 30 per cent void-to-tread ratio) so they can expel mud and snow, but their rubber compound hardens at +7C and below.

M+S tires, are not winter rated—they do not bear the winter tire mountain snowflake symbol because they do not meet the snow traction requirements true winter tires must meet to earn that designation.

MYTH #3: ALL-WHEEL DRIVE (AWD), 4-WHEEL DRIVE (4WD) & OTHER ELECTRONIC SYSTEMS ARE ALL THAT'S NEEDED FOR SAFE GRIP AND TRACTION IN WINTER

4WD allows each wheel to turn at the same speed and propel a vehicle forward, and AWD helps you move forward by getting power to the wheels with the most traction. But it's the tires that contact the road and their flexibility that determines if you'll have grip and traction.

"What's important to remember here is these electronic systems won't have much grip to work with at a slippery intersection if your tires are 3-seasons that have gone stiff in the cold," says Wiebe.

"It comes down to expanding your margin of safety—for you and all the other people on the road. We all want our vehicles to stop in time and stay on the road, and we want the vehicles driving around us to stop in time too," says Wiebe. "It's the same with drivers talking on their phones. We're encouraging drivers everywhere to make the '7 Degree Switch.'"

Balcaen says tires are everything when it comes to your vehicle's performance and safety. "I wouldn't step into my race car without putting my helmet on—just like I wouldn't drive my personal vehicle in the winter without my winter tires."

About Kal Tire

Kal Tire is Canada's largest independent tire dealer and one of North America's largest commercial tire dealers. Kal Tire's Mining Tire Group is a global leader in mining tire service and supply, supporting more than 150 mine sites across five continents. The company has warehouse facilities across Canada servicing more than 250 Kal Tire retail and commercial stores. Kal Tire owns and operates 10 truck tire retread facilities plus an additional five earthmover retreading facilities located in Canada, the United Kingdom, Chile, and Ghana. The company employs more than 6,500 team members.

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The following media resources are on Kal Tire's online [newsroom](#):

1. Photos
2. Infographic
3. B-Roll video
4. Articles: [How Do Winter Tires Earn the Mountain Snowflake Symbol?](#)
[What's the Difference Between Winter Tires & M+S Tires?](#)
[What's the Difference Between Winter, All-Weather & 3-Season Tires?](#)

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1) http://www.tc.gc.ca/eng/motorvehiclesafety/tp-tp2823-menu-200.htm#h_8