

California's Efficiency Standards for Replacement Tires Will Lower Drivers' Fuel Costs, Cut Pollution

August 2026

Standards adopted by the California Energy Commission will ensure replacement tires are as efficient as the ones that come on a new vehicle, saving California drivers money while reducing pollution.

Inefficient replacement tires are costing drivers. While car manufacturers typically ship new vehicles with fuel-efficient tires because they are a low-cost way to help meet vehicle fuel economy standards, there have been no efficiency requirements for replacement tires. As a result, drivers who replace a vehicle's original tires have to buy more gas (or electricity, for EVs) to travel the same distance.

In a major win for drivers, the California Energy Commission (CEC) adopted standards in August 2026 that will ensure all new replacement tires meet a minimum level of energy efficiency. Tire efficiency is determined by how much energy a tire wastes as it rolls, known as rolling resistance. Manufacturers can meet the standards by incorporating designs and technologies already used on tires shipped on new vehicles today.

The standards, which a 2003 state law directed the CEC to establish, will ramp up in two phases. By 2029, today's least efficient replacement tires will no longer be sold. By 2033, new replacement tires will be required to be as efficient as the average of ones found on new vehicles today.

The standards will put money back in drivers' pockets

As more efficient tires replace inefficient ones, Californians will save nearly \$1 billion each year on fuel. The CEC's calculations are based on a 2023 estimate of the average gas price in California (\$4.60 per gallon), so the savings could be significantly larger if today's higher gasoline prices continue.

The savings will especially benefit low-income households, who spend a higher percentage of their income on gas than other households, and will far outweigh any increase in upfront costs. The CEC estimates the small price increase for a set of four tires will be paid back in about seven months on average through reduced fuel costs. That's just a fraction of the four-year average lifespan of a replacement tire set.

Drivers of typical gasoline vehicles will save about

\$180

in fuel costs over the life of a set of replacement tires



Electric vehicle drivers in California are expected to see cost savings similar to those for gasoline vehicle drivers, a 2025 ASAP report found. Because inefficient replacement tires can reduce an EV's range, the standards also offer a critical performance benefit by preserving driving range.



The standards will cut pollution harming the climate and health

The standards will reduce statewide greenhouse gas emissions by about two million metric tons each year, CEC estimates. This is equivalent to taking about 400,000 gas cars off the road. The standards will also protect public health by curbing emissions of nitrogen oxides, particulate matter, and other forms of air pollution.

The standards will support safety alongside efficiency

Tires meeting the efficiency standards are already widely used on new cars, and testing confirms that they are safe. The consulting firm Smithers tested 179 tire models' ability to stop on wet pavement (their "wet grip," a key safety metric). It found no correlation between wet grip index and rolling resistance. For the most common category of tires, it even found that the average wet grip of tires that meet the second phase of the standards is slightly better than the average for tires that do not.

The CEC also adopted a minimum wet grip standard that will take some of the least safe tires off the market. The Smithers dataset showed that these underperforming models are also relatively inefficient and do not meet the new efficiency standards.

The standards will maintain tire longevity

The CEC found no apparent correlation between a replacement tire's rolling resistance and its Uniform Tire Quality Grading treadwear rating, a measure of longevity reported by manufacturers. Real-world testing reinforces that efficient replacement tires last as long as less efficient models. [Consumer Reports](#) tests of all-season tires showed that those with better efficiency performance (with scores of 4 or 5 on rolling resistance) had average tested tread lifetimes that were about 3,000 miles greater than those of less efficient tires.

As a safeguard, the standards include separate, less stringent efficiency requirements for "long-life" and "ultra-long life" classes to help ensure that existing extended-wear tire characteristics remain in the market.

Regulators ensured specialty tires could continue to be sold

The CEC took multiple rounds of public comments and incorporated changes recommended by stakeholders, including tire manufacturers. The final standards include exemptions to ensure niche tire categories, such as motorsports tires, remain available.

For more information, please contact Brian Fadie at bfadie@standardsasap.org

