

Real Answers

BRIDGESTONE
News and Information for Truck and Bus Fleets in Europe

EDITORIAL

In this second issue of the new-look *Real Answers*, we once again take a wide-ranging tour around Bridgestone's activities in the European truck and bus world.

The main theme is service capability – and our lead story alongside looks at the latest methods and tools being introduced to meet the expectations of the growing megafleet sector.

'World Focus' (page 3) turns its eyes Eastward, to discover how transport operators in the former Soviet bloc countries are adapting to freedom from the restrictions of Communism.

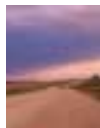
Our regular features include Martin's technical tips, a tyre review and news of events around Europe.

Plus, to celebrate our 50th Formula 1 victory, we offer you a chance to win a fabulous expenses-paid trip to the Ferrari factory in Maranello, Italy.

We hope you enjoy *Real Answers*, and invite you to write to us if you have ideas about other topics that could be of interest to yourself and fellow readers. You'll find the address of your local Bridgestone/Firestone sales office on the back page.



Des Collins
Vice President
Sales and Marketing
Bridgestone/Firestone Europe



Bridging the East-West gap with Bridgestone products.

3


Cost saving performance from the very first kilometre.

4

REAL ANSWERS COMPETITION

WIN A TRIP TO MARANELLO, THE CITY OF FERRARI

8

Fleet business issue

Proactive approach anticipates service demands of industry giants

Moving with the megafleets

Megafleets of over 1,000 trucks are taking a growing share of European transport business.

To meet their needs, Bridgestone is gearing up for maximum added value.



▲ Megafleets largely form as a result of mergers and acquisitions



▲ Bridgestone Megafleet
Project manager Gerry Duffy

In 1999, megafleets accounted for just more than 10% of Europe's vehicle pool; by 2004 the figure is likely to have risen to around 25%. This growth will largely result from mergers and acquisitions, which typically absorb medium fleets of 50-500 trucks. Over the same period, the small-fleet sector will probably have shrunk from two thirds, to

stabilise at about half – with many businesses also providing peripheral services to the top-tier international companies.

"Megafleets represent a potent force in the industry," observes Gerry Duffy, manager of Bridgestone's Megafleet Project. "Their business focus is naturally on maximising productivity, while driving down costs. We respond by offering flexible product/service packages that extend to complete

'one-stop' tyre management via our network of sales offices and dealer partners. This includes the supply of new and retread tyres, fleet audit, casing management, technical support and breakdown service, plus comprehensive cost/performance reporting and centralised billing."

New services

"Given the increasingly pan-European nature of megafleets, ▶

FLEET BUSINESS

► Continued from page 1

we back our national organisations with a central team bringing together specialists in logistics, finance and IT," Gerry adds. "And we are constantly exploring new ways to optimise the added value to our customers."

Recent developments include the establishment of Service Europe call centres (page 5) and deployment of Fleet Chief for efficient on-site tyre monitoring by Truck Point dealers.

Drivers for change

"Of course, the demands of the megafleet operators will not stand still," says Gerry.



"Megafleets represent a potent force in the industry."

Gerry Duffy

"They will be aspiring to the perceived 'best practices' in all areas – and will, in turn, be driven by the increasing expectations of their own customers."

"Emerging computer applications will bring important innovations. For example, we are working on new developments in e-commerce – and we continue to pursue the concept of the 'intelligent' tyre-with-a-chip, which could allow remote recording of its entire working history. Some of these advances will take time to realise, but there are megachanges ahead." ●

Product Focus

Bridgestone Research & Development answers tough trailer demands

High performance for low loaders



▲ An example of a Low Platform Trailer (LPT) as supported by the R166 tyre

▲ A Bridgestone R166 LPT tyre

Low platform trailer tyres absorb some extremely severe punishment. Ensuring long trouble-free lifetimes under these circumstances requires a robust combination of advanced technologies.

Fast highway haulage of cars, civil engineering equipment, containers and other heavy cargo imposes severe demands on the hard-working tyres of low platform trailers and semi-trailers.

"High loading weights, hot running over long distances, severe scrubbing on fixed axles – all combine to make this one of the most demanding of all on-road applications," points out Gaetan Jouve, field engineer for Bridgestone/Firestone, France. "In fact, it is not unusual for users to opt for nitrogen as the inflation gas, in order to obtain an added cooling effect," he says.

Technologies for a tougher tyre

The R166 series is Bridgestone's latest answer to such testing conditions. Replacing the widely used R184 range, it incorporates new technologies that increase the ruggedness of the carcass and enhance resistance to irregular wear.

Overall, the advanced casing has been computer optimised, using the Comprehensive

Tyre Design Method (C.T.D.M.)* to balance shape, construction and materials as a means of reducing stress points when cornering or driving in road grooves.

Equaliser Rib Design* provides more uniform pressure distribution across the main ribs. In addition, small, flexible stone ejectors moulded into the base of the grooves offer an effective safeguard against damage and puncturing.

Comfort, too

As well as these practical features, the R166 incorporates a Groove Fence* that traps road-noise, adding to driver comfort and reducing the environmental impact.

Experience indicates that the incidence of explosive failure is dramatically reduced, while cost/km is 5-10% lower than that of competitive brands.

The most popular sizes are 9.5 R 17.5, 215/75 R 17.5, 265/70 R 19.5 and 285/70 R 19.5. ●

"The most demanding of all on-road applications."

Gaetan Jouve

***More information on the tyres and their underlying technologies can be found on the Bridgestone/Firestone website at:**

<http://www.bridgestone-eu.com>

World focus

Transport in Central and Eastern Europe heads into the 21st century

Look East

Many transport operations in the Central and Eastern European countries lag behind those in the West. But as infrastructures improve and fleets are progressively modernised, the scene is changing.

Transforming the economies of Europe's former Soviet bloc nations is a lengthy and costly process. Among the legacies of years of Communist rule are elderly ex-state-owned truck fleets, poorly maintained roads and a lack of investment in motorway construction. Today, however, the region is moving ahead. In the transport sector, as in many others, the East-West gap is gradually shrinking – although some differences remain between individual countries.

Quality gains ground

"Though new highways are going to be built in Poland throughout the next 15 years, current road conditions are not very good," says Poland product manager, Rafal Spiridon. "The resulting high levels of tyre damage significantly shorten lifetimes and reduce retreadability. Given the limited resources of small hauliers in particular, the market is still dominated by low-cost local products."

"Yet, while the state-owned largest fleets are tending to shrink in this country, the medium-sized sector is expanding. Operators at this level recognize the economic benefits of tyres giving low cost/km. Consequently, Poland is already the sixth largest European market for Bridgestone/Firestone," he adds.

Bulgaria also has very few large fleets. Here, more discerning owners seeking an acceptable balance of cost and quality opt more frequently for the Firestone range.

Overall, Bridgestone/Firestone's products nevertheless outsell all other imported brands.

In Hungary, by contrast, Bridgestone tyres acquired in the West have long been used by some of the country's several large fleets. Since the establishment of a local sales facility, market share has grown to around 15%.

Motivation to modernise

Business with the West is virtually essential to the survival of Eastern hauliers, so their vehicles must be able to meet the higher roadworthiness standards. This is a powerful incentive to modernise.

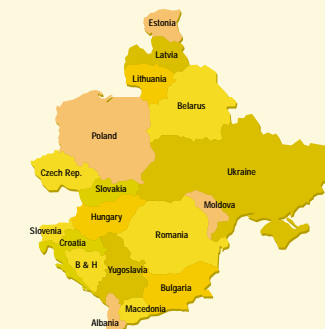
At the same time, a number of large Western companies are establishing subsidiaries in the region, to which they apply consistent fleet-wide norms. The use of premium brand tyres will thus continue to increase. And the added value of the integrated product/service offered by Bridgestone/Firestone Europe (BFE) will become increasingly evident. ●

▼ Rafal Spiridon, product manager in Poland



Bridgestone's growing presence

Bridgestone's entry into Central/Eastern Europe came in 1994, when the multinational trading company Mitsui began importing modest quantities of tyres. Demand soon increased – and in 1998, Bridgestone/Firestone Europe set up joint-venture sales companies with Mitsui in Poland, Hungary and the Czech Republic (also serving the Slovakian market). Mitsui itself continues to supply Bulgaria and Romania.



The number of dealers has grown rapidly in recent years. "In Hungary, for example, it has risen in just three years from around 30 to more than 180, many of whom are now dedicated to our brands," notes Bridgestone/Firestone Hungary's Peter Urban. Correspondents from the various countries confirm that the local enterprises generally offer excellent support. "They are equal to, and – because of the intense competition – sometimes even better than those in the West," Urban claims.

With the teamwork of its skilled dealers and energetic staff, Bridgestone/Firestone offers high service levels in Central and Eastern Europe. Transiting Western drivers can thus be confident that top-quality products and services are now readily obtainable throughout this broad territory. ●

MARTIN'S TIPS



▲ Martin Kalagin, Manager Retread

The Ten (Tyre) Commandments

► Use the correct tyre

Ensure that you, or a qualified expert, have selected the best tyre for your vehicle's requirements in terms of size, pattern and load/speed index.

► Maintain correct inflation pressure

It is not the tyre that carries the load, but the air inside it. Proper inflation pressure guards against steel cable fatigue, overheating and irregular wear.

► Do not overload

Overloading stresses the tyre's internal construction, causing increased heat generation, reduced potential life span, irregular wear and even total premature tyre failure.

► Maintain correct wheel and axle alignment

Maintaining correct alignment ensures that the tyre does not have uneven ground contact distribution. Tracking, camber and castor need to be checked and adjusted by a professional regularly.

► Regularly inspect your vehicle's tyres for damage

Most tyre damage or irregular wear can be repaired if found immediately or in the early stages. Regular tyre inspection

► Continued on page 5

Original Equipment Market

New vehicle tyre selection brings early economies

Name your tyres, limit your costs

Specifying a preferred tyre choice when purchasing new vehicles, is an excellent way to ensure cost-saving performance from the very first kilometre. More truck and bus operators could be taking advantage of this valuable opportunity.



Market surveys indicate that more than 80% of heavy truck and bus operators name a particular tyre brand in their specifications for new fleet purchases. The proportion drops to around 50% for medium trucks and to a much lower level for light vehicles.

The figures in the graph below reflect the fact that selection is usually either the primary business function or an important cost factor for enterprises running large fleets of heavy trucks, which consequently pay close attention to all areas of potential economy. For smaller-scale users and the operators of lighter trucks, vehicle ownership may be secondary to another commercial focus – and may therefore receive less consideration. However, such businesses can also benefit from an informed tyre choice when placing new truck orders.

"Confirmed Bridgestone users can profit from reduced running costs."

Gerard van der Veen

Immediate benefits

"Confirmed Bridgestone users can thus profit from reduced running costs from the day that each vehicle enters into service.

Standardisation also allows tyre inventories to be minimised, and enables full benefit to be drawn from the excellent services offered by our Truck Point network and other dealers," he says.

"Less committed managers can also take the opportunity to carry out comparative tyre tests on new trucks," Gerard

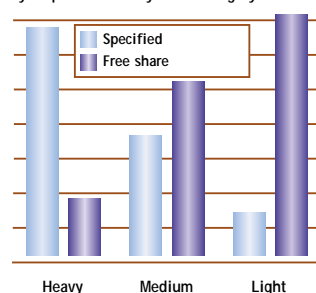
suggests. "In this way, they can discover how a wise tyre selection will help them to optimise the return on their investments." ●

Established OEM supplier

Bridgestone has a proven record of lower cost/km in highway, local delivery and public transport applications, and is an approved original equipment supplier to all of the major Western European truck manufacturers. Some of them even use Bridgestone's own Technical Centre Europe in Rome, Italy, as an official quality testing facility.

"As a result of the close relationships we have developed, OEM (Original Equipment Manufacturer) take-up of our products has increased almost four-fold since 1994 – so they are virtually always available for fitment on request," says Gerard van der Veen, Bridgestone/Firestone Europe's general manager, truck and bus tyre sales.

Tyre specification by truck category



Service Europe

New support centres make fast roadside service only a phone call away

Just call for help

Tyre blowout on a foreign road, hundreds of kilometres from your home base. You have a perishable load and an urgent delivery deadline. But you don't speak the local language, and you're not sure whom to contact for the fastest breakdown response...

Service Europe adds a new dimension to Bridgestone/Firestone's roadside tyre support for international truck fleets. Now, requests for help can simply be telephoned to a dedicated call centre, which will do everything necessary to arrange for on-the-spot assistance in the shortest possible time.

Two centres have been established, both accessible around the clock, seven days a week. One, located in Belgium, serves the Northern European countries; while another, in France, deals with the Southern half of the continent.

Only one number

"Drivers need to remember just one telephone number," says a call centre service manager. "And rather than requiring an irritating sequence of push-button responses to

automatic voice messages, their calls are immediately handled by human operators – each of whom speaks a minimum of four languages. Average response time is just 15 seconds," he adds.

"Sophisticated software at the centres map a stranded vehicle's location and identifies the nearest service provider. Wherever possible, this will be a member of the Bridgestone Truck Point network – but the overall priority is to solve problems with minimal delay," he continues.

"The already small risk of communication problems will further be reduced with the introduction in coming months of an automatic screening system, which will detect the users' telephone numbers and automatically direct incoming calls to an appropriate language-speaker," he concludes.

"the overall priority is to solve problems with minimal delay."

Call centre manager



Closely monitored system

In order to ensure a consistently high standard of service, the time and details of each call are logged, together with the time that the truck is back on the road – typically within 1 to 1.5 hours. This information forms the basis of incident reports that can be supplied to fleet managers. In addition, it allows continuous monitoring of the performance of individual providers.

Service Europe prices are standardised throughout Europe. No immediate payment is required for intervention, the cost of which can be invoiced to the fleet headquarters or its representative dealer. ●



▲ Multilingual operators stand by to assist truck drivers with tyre problems

Access to Service Europe requires prior fleet registration. For details, contact the Bridgestone/Firestone sales office in the country in which your fleet is based. More information can also be found on our website, under Services at

<http://www.bridgestone-eu.com/english/bs/sitemap/map.htm>

MARTIN'S TIPS

► Continued from page 4

(walk around the vehicle) is important if you want to react before the real damage is done.

► Rotate tyres on your vehicle

Tyre rotation is essential to minimise 'wheel-position specific' irregular or increased wear, by moving a wheel from an especially demanding to a less exposed axle position, for example in trailers, by moving the 1st or 3rd axle tyres to the less severe 2nd position.

► Use correct rims, valves and valve-extensions

Ensure that your tyre is mounted on the correct rim (size, offset etc.) to avoid irregular wear or tyre failure. The same goes for valves and valve-extensions. Only use quality materials as recommended by your tyre service expert.

► Use proper valve-caps with O-Rings

Valves without proper valve-caps are exposed, which causes dirt to clog up the visible part of the valve core and potentially cause a slow leakage of air. Always use proper valve-caps with O-Rings inside (metal ones are best).

► Balance steering tyres

Sophisticated steering and suspension systems may absorb a lot of driving and weight forces generated by tyre rotation. But weight forces on steering tyres still need to be counter-measured by means of dynamic balancing.

► Only use qualified tyre fitting & maintenance service providers

Remember: you get what you pay for. A dedicated specialist who knows the required technical parameters might cost you more initially, but will save you money in the long run.

FACTS & FIGURES

Diesel Prices across Europe

Many of our readers often cross borders, and it can be difficult not knowing how much your fuel will cost in a new country. Now you have a new reason to keep *Real Answers* close at hand. The useful table below provides you with diesel prices, not only in euros, but also in the country's own currency.

Country	Price in Country Currency*	Price in Euros*
Austria	10,1 ATS	0,73
Belgium	30,4 BEF	0,75
Bulgaria	0,99 BGL	0,51
Croatia	5,69 HRK	0,72
Czech Republic	26,2 CZK	0,76
Denmark	6,97 DKK	0,93
Estonia	9,4 EEK	0,60
Finland	4,96 FIM	0,91
France	5,20 FRF	0,79
Germany	1,57 DEM	0,80
Great Britain	0,76 GBP	1,25
Greece	228 GRD	0,69
Holland	1,82 NLG	0,83
Hungary	210 HUF	0,83
Ireland	0,59 IEP	0,75
Italy	1710 ITL	0,88
Latvia	0,39 LVL	0,70
Lithuania	2,01 LTL	0,57
Luxembourg	28 LUF	0,69
Norway	8,30 NOK	1,03
Poland	2,6 PLZ	0,74
Portugal	130 PTE	0,64
Romania	12500 ROL	0,62
Slovakia	31,9 SKK	0,74
Slovenia	150,4 SIT	0,71
Spain	117,9 ESP	0,71
Sweden	8,69 SEK	0,95
Switzerland	1,40 CHF	0,93
Turkey	784000 TRL	0,78

The above prices are correct as at 1/9/2001.
* VAT included

Fleet Focus

Garbage collection fleet for Denmark's second city runs exclusively on Bridgestone

Bridgestone best for bin-men

Miljø Team Århus operates the garbage collection service in Denmark's second largest city: Århus. In this arduous application, Bridgestone tyres are providing longer lifetimes and lower damage rates than any competitive products previously used.



▲ Tyre fitter Dan Olesen preparing an R297 for fitting on a garbage collection unit

Garbage collection in an urban environment is particularly demanding on tyres – with high loading weights, stop-start operation and frequent turns in limited spaces. After carrying out extensive comparative tests with different brands, Miljø Team Århus standardised exclusively on Bridgestone for its fleet of 100 Scania, Volvo and MAN trucks.

"We have used Bridgestones for the past four years, as we concluded that they could carry the heaviest loads for the longest times," observes Miljø's purchasing manager Brian Thrige. He goes on: "The R297 steer tyre, in particular, offers a perfect fit to our driving requirements. It has a rugged tread-pattern design and an incredibly tough casing, which is especially advantageous for

heavy-duty city usage such as ours."

Cost-saving features

"As well as offering far better value per km than any of the brands we have previously used, its strength makes front tyre damage due to kerbing extremely rare – saving us a lot of time as well as money. In addition, the rugged construction means that the Bridgestone product is eminently suitable for re-grooving or retreading, after which we re-use it as a drive tyre," says Brian.

"Another benefit is the fact that the R297 can be used throughout the year," Brian adds: "Our drivers comment on its safety and low noise under all conditions. Moreover, we can make further valuable economies by no longer needing to stock separate summer and winter models. We are looking forward to fitting the new 315/70 R22.5 size R297 later this year, as this will enable us to fit Bridgestones on the few trucks that could not so far be equipped."



▲ Brian Thrige next to the garbage collection unit 'Rødhalsen', or 'the Robin'. Miljø Team Århus names its units after birds

Good relations

Underpinning the strong relationship between Miljø and Bridgestone is the human element. Brian says: "We have excellent contacts with people at the local dealer Aabyhøj Vulkanisering, and greatly appreciate their efficient and friendly approach in meeting our requirements and solving any problems that may arise," he says. Brian concludes: "We make our living by offering a fast, professional service – and that's what we count on our tyre supplier to deliver." ●

The R297 is available from your local dealer and is typically used as a medium - to short-haul steer tyre by regional truck operators seeking the best combination of value per km and damage-resistance.

News

Poznan plant opening – 2 July 2001

The opening of a brand-new Bridgestone/Firestone tyre manufacturing plant at Poznan in Poland (BFPN) saw about 300 guests attending. The event was characterised by speeches from BFPN President, BS and BFE representatives and representatives of the Embassy of Japan, and Polish central and local government, as well

as by a tree-planting ceremony and a traditional Japanese sake ceremony. The sake ceremony, called Kagami Biraki, was carried out according to Japanese custom to bring success and prosperity to the Poznan plant. The event was hailed in the media as the biggest Japanese investment in the Poznan area. ●



◀ Mr. Shigeo Watanabe (president, chairman of the board and CEO), Mr. Hideaki Ueda (ambassador, embassy of Japan), Mr. Jacek Ambrozziak (vice-minister in state treasury ministry), Mr. Masakazu Sekiguchi (Bridgestone/Firestone Poland president) and Mr. Shoshi Arakawa (Bridgestone/Firestone Europe CEO), opened the sake barrel by using four special hammers

News

Supplier awards for technical excellence

It was honours all the way as Bridgestone/Firestone UK received the coveted 'JCB 2000 Supplier Award', while Bridgestone Corporation took the 'Podio Ferrari' prize for recognition of 'excellence and innovation' and was named as General Motors Supplier of the Year. Bridgestone/Firestone UK was one of five suppliers to be acknowledged, gaining the award for supply service, product quality, innovation and cost reduction. At the General Motors ceremony Bo Andersson, executive in charge, GM Worldwide Purchasing, commented "The Bridgestone Group is a role model, and it is an honour to work with a company so committed to supporting quality." ●



◀ Bridgestone/Firestone CEO Shoshi Arakawa (left) with the Podio Ferrari prize and Ferrari President Luca di Montezemolo (second from right)

News

Bridgestone/Firestone Retread efforts crowned

Portuguese retreader Retread 31 won awards with Bridgestone/Firestone retreads at the International Tyre and Rubber Association's annual exhibition in Nashville (USA). Two of the Bridgestone/Firestone retreads received awards after being judged on criteria such as appearance and finishing perfection. The two successful models were the Bridgestone R192 City Bus, which rolled away with second prize and the Fedima 13 R 22.5-L317 made under Bridgestone/Firestone certification, which won the Best of the Show award. All in all a great achievement for Retread 31, a member of the Bridgestone/Firestone Retread Program, who walk away with the laurels having been compared to all the best retreads from across the globe. ●



▲ Quadruple world champion Michael Schumacher achieves his 50th career win on Bridgestone tyres



▲ Bridgestone Motorsport director Hiroshi Yasukawa, pictured with Formula-One Vice President of FIA, Bernie Ecclestone

Formula 1

Bridgestone and Michael Schumacher share outstanding track record – but there's more to come

Fiftieth F1 First

Bridgestone recorded its 50th Formula 1 success at the French Grand Prix in July. The fact that it was also the 50th victory for top driver Michael Schumacher made this a double cause for celebration.

Now in its fifth season as a tyre supplier for the Formula 1 motor-racing World Championship, Bridgestone has contributed to more than 50 Grand Prix wins.

First to score was Mika Hakkinen, driving a Bridgestone-shod McLaren-Mercedes in the 1998 Australian round. The half-century was reached when quadruple world champion Michael Schumacher's Ferrari crossed the line ahead of brother Ralf at the Magny-Cours circuit in France on 1 July, to notch up his own 50th career win.

On the spot to offer congratulations was Bridgestone/Firestone President, Chairman and CEO Shigeo Watanabe, present at the trackside for the first time since his appointment as President. Visiting Europe on the occasion of the opening of a new tyre plant in

Poznan, Poland (see page 6/7), Mr Watanabe took the opportunity to confirm Bridgestone's continuing commitment to Formula 1 for the foreseeable future.

Benefits of participation

Association with the F1 Championship has already brought significant benefits, in terms of both brand awareness and technological insight.

"The actual number of wins is not what concerns us," says Hiroshi Yasukawa, Bridgestone's Motorsport director. "The important factor is its effect in terms of the value it brings us. Since we came into the sport in 1997 we have gained experience from Formula 1 and enjoyed good results. But there is still a lot to achieve and the fifty wins is just one step on the way." ●

COMPETITION

Do you dream of the bright red world of Ferrari?

Now you can win the trip of a lifetime to Italy, and experience a privilege previously open only to Ferrari sponsors and owners.

- *Real Answers* presents you with the opportunity to take a tour through the Ferrari car plant, see the sights of Ferrari F1, and even peek inside the Ferrari Museum.
- See the city of Maranello, where church bells ring in triumph when Ferrari wins a Grand Prix (even in the middle of the night for the Australian Grand Prix)



- Bridgestone offers flights from your home country, including local transport and a night in a hotel for 4 lucky winners and their partners

You could win this thrilling prize. All you need to do is answer two easy questions on the attached pre-paid reply card and send it to us before 31 December, 2001. The lucky winners will be informed before the end of February 2002. Good luck!

Bridgestone/Firestone Europe S.A.

Truck & Bus Tyre Division
Belgicastraat 9
1930 Zaventem
BELGIUM
Tel.: 32 2 714 67 00
Fax: 32 2 714 68 89

www.bridgestone-eu.com

Publishing Editor: E. de Beughem, Bridgestone/Firestone Europe • Creation and Production: Propaganda N.V. - Hoogstraat 19 - B-1930 Zaventem - Belgium • Picture Copyrights: Photodisc, Bridgestone/Firestone.

* The visit to the car and F1 plants is subject to Ferrari SpA's final approval, failing which, prizes will be replaced by 4 x 2 grand stand tickets at a F1 Grand Prix 2002 championship.