

revised in 30 years, NHTSA finds that an effective date of June 1, 2007, is reasonable and in the public interest.

RMA suggested a 5-year lead-time. The Alliance suggested a September 1, 2007, effective date. Both urged that tire and vehicle modifications would require this time period to assure compliance and successful matching of the high number of tires and vehicles affected by this rule. Consumer groups, however, suggested a faster implementation schedule for both P-metric and LT tires, with CU urging that implementation begin in September 1, 2002.

For both tires and vehicles, the agency has decided to extend the effective date to June 1, 2007. This extension of the effective date reflects the reality that tire manufacturers will need to modify tire design and production to accommodate changes in materials, compounds and construction as well as respond to any revised aspects of vehicle design initiated by this final rule. It also recognizes that the vehicle manufacturers will, in response to the altered materials/compounds or constructions of tires, need to effect design changes to revalidate/redesign vehicle characteristics such as braking, handling, fuel consumption, and that some of this work can only be accomplished subsequent to the design and production changes initiated by the tire manufacturers. NHTSA believes that 4 years is in the public interest because it is need to provide sufficient lead-time for tire manufacturers and vehicle manufacturers to make necessary design and production changes for their tires and vehicles to comply with the new requirements.

Finally, to encourage the earliest possible application of the new tire performance and vehicle requirements, NHTSA is allowing manufacturers to implement the new requirements before the required dates.

F. Other Issues

1. Modification to FMVSS Nos. 110 and 120

The purpose of FMVSS No. 110 and 120 is to provide safe operational performance by ensuring that vehicles to which they apply are equipped with tires of adequate load rating and rims of appropriate size and type designation. Until recently, FMVSS No. 110 applied to passenger cars and FMVSS No. 120 applied to vehicles other than passenger cars including motorcycles and trailers.

The Tire Information final rule specified that the applicability of FMVSS Nos. 110 and 120 would correspond with the applicability of the

new light vehicle tire standard, FMVSS No. 139. FMVSS No. 110, in its entirety, now applies to light vehicles with a GVWR of 10,000 pounds or less, except motorcycles and low-speed vehicles. FMVSS No. 120 will only apply to vehicles over 10,000 pounds GVWR and motorcycles.

As discussed above in the Tire Selection Criteria/Load Limits section, the load reserve requirement contained in FMVSS No. 110, under its new applicability, has now been extended to cover MPVs, vans, trailers and pickup trucks for the first time. This load requirement, however, has been de-linked from the load specified for the high speed test. This means that P-metric and LT tires used on these vehicles are required to have a load reserve similar to that for P-metric tire used on passenger cars.

The agency has also decided to extend S4.4.1(b) of FMVSS No. 110 to light trucks and vans for the first time. S4.4.1(b) requires that each rim retain a deflated tire in the event of a rapid loss of inflation pressure from a vehicle speed of 97 km/h until the vehicle is stopped with a controlled braking operation. No commenter responded to this issue.

2. Modification to FMVSS Nos. 117 and 129

FMVSS No. 117 specifies performance requirements for retreaded pneumatic passenger car tires and FMVSS No. 129 specifies performance requirements for new non-pneumatic tires for passenger cars. FMVSS No. 117 specifies that retreaded tires shall comply with the FMVSS No. 109 strength and resistance-to-bead unseating tests and FMVSS No. 129 specifies that its tire strength and high-speed specifications mirror those of FMVSS No. 109. The agency proposed that, to maintain consistent testing procedures and requirements for all tires for use on light vehicles, the strength and resistance to bead-unseating test procedures in FMVSS No. 117 would be replaced with the proposed road hazard and bead unseating tests in FMVSS No. 139 and, similarly, the strength and high speed test procedures and requirements in FMVSS No. 129 would be revised to mirror those proposed for FMVSS No. 139. To retain consistency with the applicability of FMVSS No. 139, the agency also proposed to revise the applicability of FMVSS Nos. 117 and 129 to include retreaded and non-pneumatic tires, respectively, for use on motor vehicles with a GVWR of 10,000 pounds or less, manufactured after 1975, except for motorcycles.

Several commenters objected to the agency adopting the proposed test road hazard and bead unseating tests for retreaded tires. For instance, ITRA and TANA argued that the proposed tests are redundant since the retread process does not affect the structure of the original casing of the tire. No comments were received on the proposed revision to FMVSS No. 129 or the revised applicability for both standards.

The agency had decided not to adopt the revised applicability provisions of FMVSS No. 117 and 129 as proposed in the NPRM. Given that the construction of retreaded tires and non-pneumatic tire/wheel assemblies would be different for other light vehicles than for passenger cars and the agency has not conducted any research or testing in this area, it needs to better understand the performance and safety implications of this proposal before its institution.

Because the agency is retaining the strength and road hazard requirements of FMVSS No. 109 for FMVSS No. 139, it has also decided to retain these requirements for FMVSS Nos. 117 and 129. This decision will impose no new requirements on tire retreaders. Retreaders will continue to be required to follow the same procedures and fulfill the same requirements that have been required under FMVSS No. 117. Similarly, non-pneumatic tires will be subject to the same performance requirements for strength testing that have existed up to the present.

Additionally, FMVSS No. 129 will incorporate by reference the high speed and endurance tests in FMVSS No. 109 rather than adopting those in FMVSS No. 139. The agency has elected to retain these tests because, due to the limited time frame for this rulemaking, it was unable to evaluate the effect of the new, more stringent high speed and endurance parameters on FMVSS No. 129 tires to the new high speed and endurance tests.

The intent of the agency in this rulemaking has been to focus on mainstream passenger vehicle tires, OE and replacement pneumatic radial tires, which represent over 95% of the market. The agency intends to reexamine the applicability of FMVSS Nos. 117 and 129, as well as testing FMVSS Nos. 117 and 129 tires to the new high speed and endurance parameters at a future time. After the agency completes its research on aging, bead unseating, and road hazard impact, and makes its rulemaking decisions based on that research, NHTSA will then consider whether to incorporate any new or revised procedure into FMVSS Nos. 117 and 129.