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NHTSA WARNS ABOUT HAZARDS OF FIXING TIRES FILLED WITH AEROSOL INFLATORS

The National Highway Traffic Safety Administration (NHTSA) today cautioned motorists and urged workers at service stations and auto and tire repair shops to be careful while fixing tires that have been filled with aerosol inflators.

According to NHTSA Administrator Jerry Ralph Curry, many of the aerosol inflators contain a flammable propellant that can cause an explosion under certain circumstances. "People in the tire repair business especially should be aware of the hazard and take precautions to reduce the risk of an explosion," he said.

Aerosol inflators, marketed under various brand names, are widely sold to the public for temporarily fixing tires that have gone flat because of slow leaks and small punctures, Curry said.

He said that despite flammability warnings on the cans and instructions for safe use, many consumers may be unaware of the potential danger. "Aerosol flat tire fixes should be considered as emergency, temporary repairs and used with caution. It is always preferable to have the tire repaired professionally or replaced.

"After filling a tire with an aerosol inflator, don't expose the tire to extreme heat, flames, sparks or other ignition sources. Be careful using metal tools like tire irons, metal reamers and hammers because they could cause sparks while being used to repair a tire," Curry said.

He noted that because aerosol inflators are used so commonly, consumers and service personnel should assume a tire may have been repaired previously with an aerosol product. "Before starting to fix a tire, remove the valve core and completely deflate the tire to eliminate as much of the aerosol propellant as possible. Then, inflate and deflate the tire a few times to completely remove all traces of the potentially explosive propellant. Once this is done, you may repair the tire without risk of explosion," Curry said.

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