McLAREN
Manufacturer of Tracks and Tires

How Tight Should Skid Steer Tracks Be?



Skid steer tracks that are too loose or too tight can have a negative impact on the track's life as well as the machine's. As such, it's important to ensure your skid steer's tracks are at the correct tightness. The question then arises: how tight should skid steer tracks be? To shed some light on the subject, we have composed this helpful guide.

Negative Impacts of Tracks That Are Too Tight

When installing a track on a skid steer, you don't want it to be too tight. If the track is too tight, you are essentially binding up the machine and the undercarriage. Doing so can have several negative repercussions.

For example, if you make the track too tight, the machine's hydraulic drive motor must use more torque to turn the track. As a result, your skid steer will burn more fuel, the machine's hydraulic fluid will heat up faster, and the skid steer will wear out more quickly.

In addition to placing added stress on the machine, using tracks that are too tight will also wear the track out faster due to the constant increased tensile load on the track. Plus, there will always be cases when debris gets between the undercarriage and the track, which will stretch the tight track out even more. If something big gets caught between the undercarriage and the track, the track could even get pulled apart.

Consequences of Tracks That Are Too Loose

If the track is too loose, there are also several negative impacts that can occur. For example, if a track is not tight enough, it is very easy for the track to become derailed. If the track derails, the guides on the rubber track typically become bent or otherwise damaged because the rollers will roll over them in an incorrect way.

If the track comes off and gets caught on the machine frame, the undercarriage may also cut the inside of the track, thus causing further damage. By leaving the track loose, there are also chances that the track may bend backward when rolling over a large object, causing it to get caught on the undercarriage frame and potentially pulling out a metal guide.

In addition to potential track and machine damage, using loose tracks that come off more easily will also result in increased downtime, which can lead to numerous negative impacts for your business.

Ideal Skid Steer Track Tightness

Ideally, a skid steer track should be taut—not too loose and not too tight. In the past, skid steer owners would test the tightness by putting a straight edge across the top of the track and measuring three to four inches of sag or dip to determine if it was the correct tightness. Now, however, the way that machines are set up varies significantly. As such, there is no universal way to determine if a track is at the correct tightness. Therefore, the best option is to consult your machine manufacturer's recommended guidelines regarding track tension and tightness.

McLaren Industries is recognized as the best rubber track manufacturer in the industry for several reasons. We use the highest quality materials available, such as our advanced rubber compound. Additionally, our rubber tracks are engineered to last with our proprietary SpoolRite Belting Technology™ to ensure even tension along your tracks at all times and superior durability. Furthermore, McLaren offers the largest variety of compact track loader rubber track patterns on the market. Contact us today to discover the multitude of specialized track patterns by McLaren. Give us a call at (800)836-0040 or click here to fill out a quote today!