Understanding the Different Types of Skid Steer Tires



The choice of which type of tires to equip your skid steer with is a highly influential decision. In addition to impacting how much downtime your machine incurs, your choice of tire can also significantly affect operator comfort, the lifespan of your machinery, what surfaces you can operate on, and the maintenance costs you will incur. Before making your decision, it's important to have a strong understanding of the different types of skid steer tires. To learn about the key aspects of the most prevalent skid steer tire options currently on the market, continue reading.

Pneumatic Skid Steer Tires

Pneumatic skid steer tires refer to rubber tires that are filled with air. While pneumatic skid steer tires can get punctured easily and incur a considerable amount of machine downtime, many people still choose them due to one primary factor—their cost.

In comparison to other tire options, pneumatic tires are the least expensive. Before simply choosing pneumatic tires due to their lower cost, however, you must consider the negative impact that downtime can have on your business's finances and reputation. In many cases, the cost of having to replace the flat pneumatic tires coupled with the downtime that they can incur ultimately ends up costing businesses more than if they had invested in one of the flat-proof options listed below.

Flat-Proof Skid Steer Tires

Because the number one cause of skid steer downtime is flat tires, it is highly advantageous to invest in flat proof tires. The different types of flat-proof tires for skid steers include foam-filled pneumatic tires, solid tires, and segmented solid tires. By eliminating the possibility of having a flat tire, these options can greatly enhance the productivity of your machinery.

Foam-Filled Pneumatic Skid Steer Tires

If you want to make your pneumatic tires flat-proof, you have the option to have them filled with foam. As their name suggests, foam-filled tires essentially refer to pneumatic tires that have been injected with foam. Doing so will help prevent the tire from getting flat if it runs over a nail or other sharp object. However, foam-filled tires are not protected against many other forms of damage.

For example, foam-filled tires can still incur sidewall damage if the side of the tire hits an object. In the case that the sidewall of a foam-filled tire gets torn or otherwise damaged, the foam inside of the pneumatic tire may start to come out. Once the sidewall of the tire has become damaged, a foam-filled tire cannot be salvaged and needs to be replaced.

Segmented Solid Skid Steer Tires

Segmented solid skid steer tires provide another option of flat-proof technology. Before solid cushion tires became popular, segmented solid tires made from multiple sections of solid rubber were highly prevalent in the industry.

While these tires have flat-proof capabilities, they ride rougher than foam-filled tires, which hindered their popularity. In addition, they also have the downfall of being more vulnerable to damage. Over time, sections of the tire often begin to separate or get items caught between them. If a section of a segmented solid skid steer tire gets damaged, you must have it replaced. However, doing so will typically cause the tire to hop. On top of these negative qualities, segmented solid tires are also more expensive than regular solid skid steer tires which has further hindered their popularity.

Despite such drawbacks, there are still some people who buy segmented solid tires. However, the market has largely evolved in the direction of solid skid steer tires, which are currently the most popular flat-proof tires on the market.

Solid Skid Steer Tires

While foam-filled tires and segmented solid tires may also have flat-proof qualities, solid cushion skid steer tires are the most durable option out of all the flat-proof tire types. A couple of decades ago, foam-filled pneumatic tires were the most popular flat-proof skid steer tire option due to their lower cost. However, skid steer solid cushion tire prices have become much more affordable and are now comparable to those of foam-filled tire prices.

In addition to their increasingly economical price tag, solid skid steer tires offer numerous additional benefits over other flat-proof options, such as added cushioning due to improvements in aperture technology, which increases operator comfort as well as decreases wear and tear on the drivetrain and axles of the skid steer. Plus, solid tires can also be designed with a much taller tread which increases their lifespan substantially. For these reasons, the industry is experiencing a large shift towards solid tires.

Different Options for Solid Cushion Tires

When it comes to skid steer solid cushion tires, there are a number of different styles, tread patterns, and aperture hole options to choose from. In terms of tread patterns, there are essentially two families of options—one for hard surfaces, and one for softer surfaces such as dirt. For example, at McLaren, we offer two different types of tread patterns known as DT (dirt terrain) and AT (all terrain). Within that line, you will also have a variety of choices to make regarding your cushion system. In other words, you can choose from various different styles, sizes, and numbers of aperture holes depending on how much cushion you need.

The more aperture holes a tire has, the more cushioning it provides. However, you should keep in mind that some manufacturers make pseudo or fake aperture holes that have a very shallow depth, which allows them to use lower-quality materials while passing their tire off as a high-quality product. Such tires are misleading and give the appearance of having ample cushion, when in reality, they have almost no cushioning. At McLaren, our tires are designed with deep aperture holes to provide you with a significant amount of cushion to protect your machinery.

There are also certain styles of solid skid steer tiles that do not have any aperture holes. Such an option is common for use in recycling plants or scrap yards where the skid steer will be used on large, smooth surfaces. Since the application environment is flat, you don’t necessarily need an extra cushion. The benefit of solid tires without any aperture holes is that they can often last longer when used on smooth surfaces. Ultimately, most solid tires get scrapped after they have been worn down to the aperture holes. However, if the tire does not have any aperture holes, they can be worn all the way down to the wheel.

We hope that this guide on understanding of the different types of skid steer tires has helped you determine which option will best suit your application. To find a set of exceptional quality tires for your skid steer, contact McLaren today at (800) 836-0040 or click here to request a quote.

