

INFLATION ON THE RISE

Florida Dealership Is Using Nitrogen To Pump Up Tires

By Kerry Pipes

Once upon a time, when the automotive industry wanted to get consumers excited about a car that featured an especially smooth ride, it would compare the driving experience to “riding on air.” Today, new technology is rewriting that phrase a bit. The “air” is being replaced, literally, by nitrogen as the inflation product of choice for car and truck tires. And dealerships, like Champion Porsche Audi in Pompano Beach, Fla., are getting their fill.

So why is nitrogen better than air? There are a number of reasons. For example, tires inflated with a concentration of at least 95 percent pure nitrogen have been scientifically proven to deliver better gas mileage, improve performance and

handling, extend tread life, and require less maintenance than those filled with air. Nitrogen is a dry inert gas that can

reduce the levels of oxygen and moisture present in traditionally air-filled tires. In the long run, tires, wheels, stems, and steel belts will all last longer when using nitrogen. The benefits, valued by teams on the NASCAR circuit for many years, are now becoming more readily available to the public, because of companies like Ingersoll-Rand, Branick, and Kreska Technologies, which makes the NitroFill brand that Champion

Porsche Audi uses in its fixed ops department.

“There was a lot of skepticism about NitroFill and whether it would really deliver at our dealership,” says Terry Doyle, Audi service manager for Champion Porsche Audi. “But in three months the experience has been totally positive. We have seen the performance and safety benefits for customers and the technicians have become the biggest believers. They all put it in their own tires when we have employee night at the shop.” That’s strong testimony.

Nitrofill’s equipment and inflation process pumps a verifiable concentration of pure nitrogen in the serviced tire in excess of 95 percent. That’s a high level of purity. Most nitrogen fill machines are generally easy to set up, very low maintenance, requiring routine filter changes, and take up very little space.

Champion, the world’s largest Porsche dealer, is servicing more than 80 cars a month with the nitrogen filling machine, a number Doyle expects to grow as more people become aware of the benefits of nitrogen versus air. At approximately \$8 per tire, most consider it a small investment with a significant upside. “We’re a high-end dealership, so it is probably an easier pitch for us, but I believe it has value at any level,” says Doyle.



Nitrogen fill provides fixed ops departments with yet another tool for generating customer loyalty as well. Once you have explained the safety benefits of using nitrogen over air, chances are



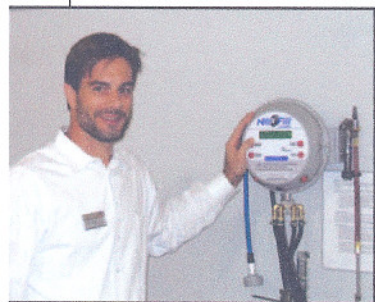
Champion Porsche/Audi Service Area

your customers will appreciate what you’re putting in their tires.

While the automotive industry expects more people to make the switch to nitrogen this year (Michelin, Bridgestone, Goodyear, and Uniroyal are just a few of the manufacturers recommending its use), it is important to note that not all nitrogen-inflated tires are created equal. Experts caution that the benefits are minimized, if not completely lost, on tires that don’t contain at least 95 percent pure nitrogen, a standard that can be difficult to attain without the right equipment and inflation process.

Heck, if you need more proof, consider that the United States Air Force uses nitrogen in every tire of the nation’s fleet of B-2 bombers.

So they’re not just blowing hot air. ■



Terry Doyle, Audi Service Manager