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# **THE TRACKER**

**THE PUBLICATION FOR TIRE PROFESSIONALS  
FROM WESTERN CANADA TIRE DEALERS**

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## Terrific Tire Technology

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We scour information and news for The Tracker from various sources, in the hope of always covering topics that are relevant and useful to your business.

These days, however, there's one theme that dominates every aspect of our day to day activities both inside the office and out: Technology

From TPMS to rapid manufacture of new tread designs, Facebook-generated leads and more, the impact of technology on the tire industry is immeasurable.

Every week brings new developments and advances.

### A Tire Check-up Breakthrough

One recent item to cross my screen announced the launch of SnapScan.

*"In an effort to prevent tire-related accidents," reports Tire Review, "Nokian Tyres has partnered with tire and service chain Vianor to launch the new tire monitoring technology, SnapScan, in Finland."*

SnapScan is a classic example of highly developed technology at work in the tire industry. Its 3-D process performs a variety of analyses

as a vehicle drives over a scanning plate. A camera records the vehicle's license plate number and the operator can receive up to the minute information via text or email regarding the tires' tread depths, pressures, axle loads and so on—even damage issues can

be detected. The system is also offered via a handheld scanner.

The installation of SnapScan at Nokian-owned Vianor outlets is significant. The chain is Scandinavia's largest tire and car service group, with over 1,400 outlets in 26 countries.

"Too many people are unaware of the condition of their tires, and the threshold for replacing tires seems to be high. We want to use this new technology to raise drivers' awareness of the condition of their tires by making it as easy to access as possible," says Vianor Retail Business Manager Ville Nikkola.

Nokia also points to a study which shows about 25 per cent of tire related accidents occur due to at least one tire's tread depth being



below the minimum level. Tread depth significantly affects driving safety, through characteristics like breaking distance and aquaplaning resistance. Driving with tires in good condition gives the driver and other road-users more time to react. The SnapScan technology makes it quick and easy to monitor tire safety, as the information is sent to the vehicle owner electronically.

The technology behind SnapScan is patented by Britain's Sigmavision, which has evolved its laser technologies to specialise in supplying offline and online laser profiling systems and laser measurement systems to major tire manufacturers, such as Bridgestone and Nokian. The lead products to date are the TreadReader Hand Held scanner and TreadReader Drive Over ramp.

The first SnapScan system is being installed on the approach to one of central Helsinki's busiest underground car parks. In time, several more scanners are planned for numerous Finnish locations as well as in all more locations in Finland, including in all Vianor outlets.

The implications of such a system are profound. Much in the way that strategically placed tailpipe sensors laid the groundwork for identifying excessively polluting vehicles, it's likely that systems such as SnapScan will enable safety agencies to quickly identify unsafe vehicles.

The SnapScan system and others like it also has significant potential for fleet and heavy duty industrial applications, as well as in retail settings in North America, where Nokian says it will be introduced 'in forthcoming years.'

The same technology is used in the British developed WheelRight drive-over tire safety system, which has been tested on the busy M6 motorway. Company founder and CEO

John Catling says WheelRight could radically improve safety on U.S. roads by reducing the 35,000 fatal accidents that occur every year, which (according to the company) are commonly caused by tire failure.

### Georgia at the Fore

In mid December the WheelRight drive-over technology was unveiled at The Ray in the State of Georgia. The Ray (named for environmental pioneer Ray C. Anderson) has been dubbed "The Highway of the Future," a highly developed 18 mile stretch of Interstate 85, which aims to show that zero deaths, zero waste and zero carbon can be achieved on US highways.

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Hailed as the first publicly available installation of the system anywhere in the U.S., at the one mile mark, results of tire pressure and tread depth measurements will be provided automatically on all tires within seconds via a touch-sensitive kiosk at the West Point Visitor Center.

"The adoption of our tire monitoring technology at the visitors' center," says Catling, "puts us alongside driverless cars, smart solar-powered roads and bio-energy projects, all of which all prove the exciting future awaiting sustainable highways."

In addition to the tire and tread reader, some of the highway's attributes include attractive, translucent sound barriers that also function as solar panels, solar paving panels, repurposing toxic hog manure as a replacement for the binding agent in asphalt and electric vehicle charging stations.

In working with The Ray, the folks behind WheelRight solution are hoping to prove their point that their system is ideal for smart city applications. With an installation that will see it exposed to some 750,000 drivers and passengers annually, the news should travel fast.

It's noteworthy that these innovations hail from Europe. And it should come as no surprise that Finland and Helsinki are at the leading edge. The Finnish capital has a history of groundbreaking transportation ideas, including a multi-agency, regional transit pass that interconnects all vehicles, including trams, buses, the metro, commuter trains, Suomenlinna ferry and more.

The city has also developed a 'Mobility on Demand' app that makes it possible to call up a bus, taxi, shared car or bike just as needed. In fact, a flat fee of 249 Euros a month buys unlimited car rental, taxi and transit rides.

***While it may not happen this year, my hunch is that laser tread scanning is about to become big part of all our lives —and businesses—sooner rather than later.***

***Time and Tide—and Technology—wait for no man.***

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