

REMOVING TAR FROM TYRES & VEHICLES

WORKSHOP BULLETIN FROM TRANSPORTING NEW ZEALAND & HEAVY VEHICLE ENGINEER STEVE BULLOT

Removing tar from tyres

Softening agents

Several common household products can be used as softening agents when attempting to remove tar build-up on tyres, including:

- WD-40 or CRC 5-56: Apply liberally, allow to soak and remove with tar residue
- Kerosene or Diesel: Effective at breaking down tough, stuck-on tar
- Linseed Oil: Allow to soak 30–60 minutes to soften stubborn deposits

Commercial tar removal products may also be suitable, including Omikron GRL Tar Remover, CRC Bug & Tar, 3M Citrus Base Cleaner and Meguiar's Gold Class Bug & Tar Remover.

Tar removal process

1. Apply a softening agent such as WD-40, kerosene, linseed oil or a specialist tar remover.
2. Allow the product to soak for 1–5 minutes, depending on the thickness of the build-up.
3. Remove softened tar from tyres and the underside of mudguards using a water blaster. When water blasting:
 - a. Use minimum pressure necessary
 - b. Direct the water stream at an angle to the surface
 - c. Avoid direct high-pressure contact with tyres
4. Remove thick deposits using a plastic scraper.
5. Repeat treatment if required.
6. A final application of softening agent and brushing may be required to remove remaining residue.

Strong detergent agents or harsh chemicals are not recommended, as they may react with rubber and damage the tyre.

Important warnings

Avoid metal tools

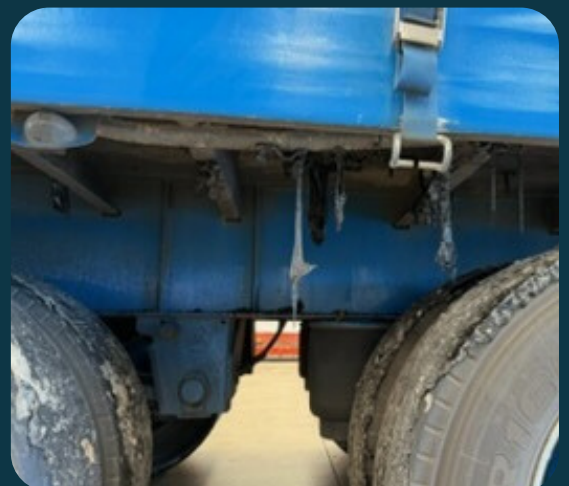
Metal scrapers or screwdrivers may damage tyre tread or cause punctures.

Protect wheel rims

Do not allow strong solvent tar removers to contact painted or alloy wheels as this may damage the finish.

Avoid strong chemicals

Harsh chemicals may degrade rubber, paint or vinyl surfaces.



Removing tar from vehicle surfaces

Painted surfaces

Similar methods can be used to remove tar from painted vehicle surfaces, although washing with water and detergent is recommended as the first step.

If tar build-up remains, softening agents described earlier may be used.

For minor deposits, commercial products such as CRC Bug & Tar Remover may be effective.

For smaller, stubborn spots:

- A clay bar or claying rubber may be used
- Always use a specialised clay lubricant or detailing spray to prevent scratching paint

Metal tools such as screwdrivers or metal scrapers should not be used, as they will damage paintwork.

Decals and vinyl wrap

Extra care must be taken when tar contamination occurs on decals or vinyl wrapping.

Decals

- Start with soapy water and light rubbing using a soft microfibre cloth
- If ineffective, a clay bar is the next least abrasive method

Vinyl wrap

- Soak the area with a safe cleaner, such as a 2:1 mixture of isopropyl alcohol and water or products labelled safe for vinyl
- Allow to soak and wipe away residue with a soft microfibre cloth
- Always test on a hidden area first to ensure no discolouration occurs

Safety and maintenance notes

All tar removal methods described involve some degree of abrasion, and there can be no guarantee that surface damage will not occur. We recommend seeking advice from maintenance professionals in the event of serious damage or where any safety concerns are present.

You can contact Transporting New Zealand for advice by calling **04 472 3877**, visiting transporting.nz or emailing info@transporting.nz

