

They are sometimes called “road gators” because of their resemblance to the back of an alligator. These large, jagged strips of rubber are often up to eight-feet long and weigh more than 100 pounds.

Technically, these strips of rubber are known as tire debris. Most of the time, they come from retreaded tires that have come loose while a [tractor-trailer](#) is operating at high speed. They can also result from other forms of tire failure.

Road gators create dangerous hazards on our roads that can easily cause accidents among [cars](#), [motorcycles](#), and other [trucks](#). It is important for anyone injured in an accident involving tire debris to understand their rights and how to seek compensation from the parties responsible for causing the accident.

Dangers from Tire Debris

Road gators are not only large and heavy, but they also contain reinforced metal belts, and the rough ends of these belts often protrude from the debris. When a passenger vehicle hits a piece of this heavy tire debris, it can cause serious problems. The collision can lead to a flat tire on the passenger vehicle, which could cause the driver to lose control and spin off the road or into another vehicle. Hitting a road gator can also cause damage to the car’s brake lines or the undercarriage which could interfere with the car’s operation.

But taking action to avoid hitting tire debris can be just as dangerous. Swerving into another lane could lead to a collision, and turning off the road at high speed could also lead to a crash. Studies have shown that swerving to avoid debris results in nearly as many accidents as are caused by hitting debris.

The worst accidents are usually those that occur when debris flies off a tractor-trailer at high speed and the tire segment hits another vehicle directly. The force can smash the windshield of a car or strike a motorcyclist with deadly force.

Why Retread Fails So Frequently

Retreading is a common practice in the trucking industry because it saves trucking companies considerable amounts of money. Instead of replacing worn tires with new ones, these companies purchase used tires that have had new

tread applied. These are sometimes called “remolded tires” or “recapped tires.”

How the Retread Process Works

The used, worn-out tires, which are referred to in the industry as “casings,” are supposed to be inspected to ensure that they are sound enough to operate safely after retreading. Then they are supposed to be buffed to wear away any remaining bits of old tread so that the new tread will bond properly.

The bonding process generally consists of several steps. An uncured bonding layer is usually applied to the casing as a cushion and then tread is supposed to be centered on that layer. Then the tire is wrapped and “cured” so that the tread will be securely attached to the bonding layer of the tire. If any stage in the process is rushed or skipped, the retreaded tire may not operate properly and the new tread could come off and end up as a road gator.

Mistakes that Lead to Retread Failure

In addition to mistakes during the retreading process, there are numerous other factors that cause retread failures.

These include:

- Not inflating tires properly
- Overloading tires with excessive weight
- Allowing tires to get too hot
- Failing to inspect regularly for cracks or delamination
- Failure to follow other instructions regarding tire treatment and maintenance

Retreaded tires do not last forever. Many manufacturers recommend replacing them after three to four years of use. Replacement is also called for if the tread depth reaches 2/32 of an inch. However, it is particularly important for trucking companies to replace retreaded tires if they show signs of dangerous amounts of wear such as severe cracks, exposed metal, or uneven wear. When companies neglect these signs or fail to perform adequate inspections, road gators can be the result.

Liability for Accidents Caused by Tire Debris

Depending on the reason for the failure of the retreaded tire, different parties may be held liable for collisions that are caused by tire debris. If the trucking company [failed to perform routine maintenance](#) or ignored service recommendations, then the company could be at fault. If the retread was defective, the company that performed the

retreading process could be liable. If a maintenance shop did a poor job on inspections, the shop could be held to blame.

One challenge accident victims often face with road gator accidents is locating the source of the tire debris. If it is not possible to find a witness who saw the tread come off the truck, and the truck driver did not stop, there are other methods that can be used to identify the source of the debris. Footage from dashcams, for instance, could show tread that is starting to come loose. Many times there are identification numbers on the tire debris that reveal the name of the company that performed the retread, and the trucking company could be traced from that information. The investigation process can take considerable time, so it is wise to begin working with a truck accident attorney as soon as possible when tire debris causes a collision.

Martin & Jones Understands How to Succeed with Complex Truck Accident Cases

[Truck accidents](#) are far more complicated than accidents involving passenger vehicles for a number of reasons. The evidence is more complex, and much of it is in the control of the trucking companies, so it takes concerted legal action to obtain. Trucking companies also start working right away to try to shift liability onto others involved, including the victims who've been injured.

At [Martin & Jones](#), we've been helping truck accident victims in North Carolina recover full compensation for their losses for decades, and we know how to overcome the challenges and stand up to the corporate legal teams of the commercial trucking enterprises. If you've been injured in a collision with a truck or an accident that involved truck debris, [contact our team to schedule a free case evaluation](#) to find out what your case may be worth and how we could work to help you recover maximum compensation.