



# Ask the experts



Should a fire extinguisher show a use-by date, asks Alan Anzarut

## Fire extinguishers

**Is there is any legal requirement for fire extinguishers to be labelled with a use-by date?**

ALAN ANZARUT, LONDON

No. However, despite the lack of legislation, most manufacturers adhere to EN3 European Standards or British Standard BS6165:2002. These state that domestic extinguishers must be labelled with the expiry date (approximately five years from the date of manufacture) and an instruction that they are not to be refilled. We recommend you check the fire extinguisher before buying to make sure it does comply with the standards. If you find any that aren't labelled, contact your trading standards department: go to [www.tradingstandards.gov.uk](http://www.tradingstandards.gov.uk) and type your postcode in the relevant box to find your local one.

Take unwanted domestic fire extinguishers to your local household waste recycling centre,

which will arrange for their disposal – you won't be charged. Never put them in a dustbin or refuse sack.

**Spin-speed savings**  
**I'm thinking of buying a new washing machine. Will a more expensive model with a higher spin speed pay for itself in reduced tumble-dryer costs?**

MICHAEL RHODES, BY EMAIL

We think it's unlikely to do so because tumble dryers generally use five times as much energy as washing machines.

However, a higher spin speed will save you time. That's why some people opt for machines with spin speeds of 1400rpm or more, even though machines with a 1200rpm spin speed (the most popular choice) should be OK for most people's drying needs. Bear in mind that higher spin speeds can damage fabrics over time.

For our latest test on washing machines, go to [www.which.co.uk/washingmachines](http://www.which.co.uk/washingmachines) or see p55 of our June issue.

**Tyre pressure gauges**  
**You're always highlighting the importance of having the correct pressure when you report on car tyres. But you**

**never evaluate tyre pressure gauges. How do you get a reliably accurate one? Which are more reliable – handheld, digital or those in garages? And who's responsible for accuracy?**

FRANK GOODLAND, WINCHESTER

Digital gauges are easier to read, but our advice is to go for mechanical pressure gauges, as they're simple to use and more resistant to shock and moisture than digital ones. We recommend one made to British Standard BSEN12645:1999, which means it will be accurate to  $\pm 1$ psi between 0 and 58psi.

Trading standards officers are responsible for checking the accuracy of garage forecourt tyre pressure gauges, so contact your local trading standards department if you are in doubt (see 'Fire extinguishers', left, for details of how to find your local one).

**Best time to sell a car**  
**I'm considering selling my car in the next year but there are only six months left before the manufacturer's three-year warranty runs out. Would it be better to sell it now to avoid a big drop in value, or is the difference insignificant?**

MARTIN WOODALL, RUNCORN



Should Martin Woodall sell his car before the warranty expires?

Generally, the rate of depreciation isn't significantly affected by the expiry of your warranty. But extended warranties or aftermarket warranties are available from your car's manufacturer or through an independent company.

You can check used-car values at [www.which.co.uk/cars](http://www.which.co.uk/cars) or in our annual supplement, *Which? Car 2007/2008*, which is published this month.

## Which? focus

**Genuine must-wear item**  
**When do I need to wear sunglasses?**

You need to wear them when it's bright and sunny. That's because, in just the same way as you can burn your skin by overexposure to ultraviolet (UV) light, you can damage your eyes. Damage caused to the eye tissue by repeated exposure to UV radiation builds up gradually and is irreversible. And the amount of UV radiation is increasing with the depletion of the ozone layer.

Most commonly, UV damage produces a painful but temporary burn to the surface of your eye (cornea) that will start to get better after 24 hours (skiers call this 'snowblindness'). But UV radiation can also cause longer-term conditions. It may lead to cataracts (clouding of the eyes), age-related macular degeneration (which causes irreversible loss of vision) or a pterygium (a small yellow blob on the white of the eye – see photo, below), as well as eyelid tumours. The same issues arise with artificial sources of UV light, such as sun beds.



**Pterygium (a yellow blob on the white of the eye) can result from damage by UV radiation**

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Your consumer questions answered by our experts, plus your chance to share your experiences with fellow Which? members



**Alice Judd**  
**Services research assistant**  
Puts sunglasses in focus



**Nina Thomas**  
**Services research assistant**  
Answers this month's questions

## Three in the back

**Our three grandchildren, all aged under five, are visiting us this summer. We'll need a car that will take three child safety seats in the rear. Any thoughts?**

GRACE FOX, BY EMAIL

It depends on which combination of child car seats you plan to use. Some cars will take two group 0+ / group 1 seats (for children from

0 to 18kg, suitable for children aged up to four) on either side and leave room for a booster seat. However, you're safer with a car with more than five full seats – which means an MPV. The Honda FR-V has three full seats across the rear, or there's the Toyota Verso, which has five seats plus two extra seats that fold into the boot floor. Both are mid-sized MPVs and are Best Buys in *Which? Car*

*2007/2008*. If you want a large MPV, the Ford Galaxy is also rated highly by our motoring team. Critically, all three have Isofix mountings, which make fitting a child seat easier and safer and which we recommend. Whichever car you choose, try the child seats in it first.

For advice on buying and fitting child seats and latest Best Buys, go to [www.which.co.uk/cars](http://www.which.co.uk/cars) or see our June issue (p70).

## on Sunglasses

Sunglasses are the favourite accessory of celebs such as Victoria Beckham. But you don't need a pair with a posh price tag to get proper protection. The crucial thing where sunglasses are concerned is how well they filter out ultraviolet (UV) rays, as it's these that can cause damage. The College of Optometrists recommends sunglasses with the European CE mark and made to British Standard BSEN1836:2005. This number applies in all EU countries without 'BS' at the beginning.

The standard also covers lenses. These come in five filter categories – 0 to 4, with 4 the darkest. The college recommends category 2, as it will give good protection from glare as well as good UV filtering.

## Sailing, skiing, driving

I like going on activity holidays. Do I need special sunglasses? And what about when I drive?

Ordinary sunglasses should be OK for sailing, provided they offer proper protection. Generally, skiing requires more protection against UV (and glare) than water sports, since more light reflects off snow than off water or sand. Wraparound glasses give full protection – ordinary sunglasses probably aren't suitable. Polycarbonate lenses offer excellent UV protection and are more shatter-resistant but they cost more.

The Highway Code says drivers shouldn't wear tinted glasses, lenses or visors or anything that restricts vision at night or in poor visibility. If you want to wear sunglasses at other times, the College of

Optometrists says to avoid category 4 lenses, as they may be too dark for you to see properly.

## Sunglasses and specs

**I wear prescription glasses.**

**Do I still need sunglasses?**

Clear-glass prescription lenses afford some protection against UV light, and plastic lenses absorb more. But sunglasses give better protection and will also protect you from glare. So you may want to consider tinted prescription glasses or photochromic lenses, which become darker with increased amounts of UV.

Clear-glass lenses and contact lenses can have filters added that absorb all UV radiation. They're advisable if you're at risk from conditions such as cataract or

age-related maculopathy – if you have a family history or are in the early stages of either disease. People with cataracts may also see a little better with a UV filter, as many cataracts contain fluorescent pigments that convert UV radiation ('invisible light') into visible light that scatters within the eye and reduces vision. Get advice from an optometrist.

## Unsafe glasses

**Are any sunglasses bad for me?**

Dark lenses (of whatever colour) without proper UV filters can do more damage than no sunglasses, because they cause your pupils to dilate, letting in more light and more UV. For this reason, you shouldn't let children wear toy sunglasses.



## Your say

Share your stories with fellow members

## Call charges

**'Let them go hang.' That was the general tone of your feelings on firms that use 0870 and other such high-cost phone numbers**

## What you told us

**'It's great to hear that Ofcom is finally doing something about the scandal of 0870 numbers. For too long inertia and consumer ignorance have allowed these premium-rate numbers to exist.'**

SAM, BY EMAIL

**'Is 0870 the number of the biggest rip-off in Britain? No – in my opinion, 0800 reverse is. My son used this to call home when out of credit on his mobile. I had expected the call wouldn't be cheap, but I hadn't expected this entry on my BT bill: "reverse charge UK (operator), 33 seconds £3.91" – and that's before VAT.'**

KEN, BY EMAIL

**'More than the charges, I resent the fact that these numbers take advantage of the public. I don't wish to listen to three or four minutes, or more, of a company advertising at my expense.'**

PAT, BY EMAIL

**'I run a business and have found out that all my calls to the company I use that processes payments made by credit cards etc are on an 0870 number. So it isn't just the public and customers who are being ripped off this way.'**

WILLIAM, BY EMAIL

## Next month

Tell us what you think of the drug industry's influence on our healthcare

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