Wheels: *Bob R. writes by e-mail: "I am driving a 2007 Saturn Aura that I purchased new and currently has only been driven for 17,000 miles. Friday when I had my oil changed I asked that they take a good look at my right rear tire, since it has had a slow leak for the past couple of weeks. They found that a nail was near the inside edge of the tire and because of the curvature in the tire at that point, it couldn't be repaired. It has been my understanding that the tire should be uniform for braking and handling. I fully understand the front tires should be the same and the rear tires should also be the same. Is it necessary for the front to match the rear? It seems a shame to through away tires that have about 40,000 miles left on them. I was thinking about buying two new all season tires for the front and keeping two of the existing tires for the rear. Thank you for your consideration of this question".*

Halderman: Sorry that you have to purchase new tires but you are correct, they should be purchased in pairs. However, the newer tires should be placed on the rear of the vehicle rather than the front according to tire and safety experts. Why? The newest tires should be placed at the rear because the rear wheels are not under direct control of the driver. The front wheels are in direct control of the driver. I know this does not sound right, but most experts recommend that the best tires be installed at the rear. If there is a flat or a loss of traction at the rear of the vehicle, the driver is not able to control the vehicle compared to if the same occurred at the front.

The same applies if installing winter tires. Many tire stores will sell or install winter tires at the rear (drive wheels) but instead say that all four tires should be of the same construction. This means that if winter tires are needed, you should replace all four. In most cases, I recommend that a winter set of four wheels and tires be purchased saving the cost and time to have the tires remounted and balanced on the factory wheels.