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Continental General Tire, Inc. Announces Customer Satisfaction Program

Charlotte, NC, September 19, 2000 - Continental General Tire, Inc. is today announcing a customer satisfaction program affecting approximately 140,000 16" original equipment ContiTrac AS (P245/75R16) tires, mounted on about 38,000 Lincoln Navigators, model years 1998 and 1999. There are also approximately 20,000 tires in the replacement market, which will also be eligible for this program.

The tires will be replaced without cost to Lincoln Navigator customers. This customer satisfaction program does not apply to any Continental 17" ContiTrac AS (P255/75R17) tires on the Lincoln Navigator. Continental General Tire is the exclusive tire supplier to the Lincoln Navigator.

This program was developed in full cooperation with Lincoln and we are working in close coordination to implement the program. Continental General Tire and Lincoln representatives met today with the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration to present them with our data and review the action we are taking.

Both Continental General Tire and Lincoln want to emphasize that this action is not a safety-related recall. In fact, Lincoln Navigators exclusively equipped with Continental tires have an excellent safety record. There have not been any serious accidents, injuries or deaths resulting from tires on Lincoln Navigators. There is no litigation.

We are initiating this customer satisfaction program because a small percentage of 16" ContiTrac AS tires on the Lincoln Navigator are more susceptible to heat stress that can cause a condition described as belt lift in the shoulder area of the tire. Under certain conditions, this belt lift could cause a section of the tread belt package to detach from the tire casing and minor vehicle body damage could result. There have not been any reports of catastrophic tire failures causing loss of vehicle control. More often than not, the condition is detected when vehicle owners noticed irregular tread wear, vibration or noise.

The warranty adjustment data and property damage claims data clearly demonstrate that the condition exists only in 16" ContiTrac AS tires manufactured prior to March of 1998. At that time, before data indicated increased warranty claims and before the belt lift condition was manifest, Continental General Tire made modifications in the manufacturing process of the tire, changing the profile of the extruded tread. The changes were made to improve the uniformity of the tire and we have seen that it also increased the ability of this tire to handle heat stress that normally affects tire durability.

Bernd Frangenberg, President and CEO of Continental General Tire said: "We will not compromise the safety of our customers. We are taking this initiative, together with Lincoln, because of our dedication to customer satisfaction. We welcome the pending legislative initiatives to improve automotive safety, and we look forward to an open, cooperative relationship with NHTSA to expedite any investigation into this matter."

Though all Navigators built between January 1997 and March 1998 are subject to

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the program we will be replacing only:

Continental ContiTrac AS P245/75R16
DOT No: AD70 449 017 through AD70 449 118

Continental General Tire will provide following tires as replacements:

ContiTrac AS P245/75R16
Grabber AW P255/70R16
Ameri 660 AS P255/70R16

We encourage all owners of 1998 and 1999 Lincoln Navigators to visit their local Lincoln dealer for tire inspection and, if necessary, free tire replacement, including mounting and balancing. We are shipping and overnighting tires to Lincoln dealers, and we anticipate all replacements will be completed within eight weeks. We also encourage Navigator owners to see Continental General Tire dealers.

We can be reached by toll-free number - 1-800 TIRE-FIX (847-3349) or by email at tirefix@gentire.com. Customers can also contact Lincoln at 1-800-521-4140 for information on the service action and tire safety or go to www.contigentire.com.

Based in Charlotte, N.C., Continental General Tire, Inc. (www.contigentire.com) is a group company of Germany-based Continental AG, a leading systems supplier to the automotive industry. With annual sales of approximately US\$1.6 billion, Continental General Tire has 9,300 employees and operates plants in Bryan, Ohio; Charlotte; Mayfield, Ky.; Mt. Vernon, Ill.; Barnesville, Ga. and Guadalajara and San Luis Potosi, Mexico. It is a major supplier to the original equipment and replacement tire markets, selling Continental, General and private brands in the United States.

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Customer Satisfaction Program Fact Sheet

For Owners of Continental P245/75R16 ContiTrac AS tires

Questions and Answers

1. What is this program about?

Continental General Tire has initiated a no-charge customer satisfaction program which will provide free replacements of Continental P245/75R16 ContiTrac AS tires, which are 16-inch tires mounted on 1998 and 1999 model Lincoln Navigators.

2. What vehicles are affected?

All model year 1998 and 1999 Lincoln Navigator vehicles with 16-inch tires.

3. What are the exact specs of the tires being affected?

Continental ContiTrac AS
P245/75R16
DOT: AD70 449 017 through AD70 449 118

4. Where can I find the DOT Number on my tires?

The DOT Number is placed on the side-wall of the tire. The initials DOT stand for Department of Transportation. The regulations come from NHTSA (National Highway Traffic Safety Administration). The DOT code prior to year 2000 was a ten digit code: (Example - AD70449248) digits 1,2 - Plant of manufacture code, digits 3,4 - Tire size code, digits 5,6,7 - Optional tire type code, digits 8,9,10 - serial week code. (The example would have been produced in Mayfield "AD" the size code would be "70", the optional design code would be "449" and the serial week would be "118".) In the year 2000 the serial number went to an 11 digit number allowing for a 4 digit serial week code to identify new decade. [Click here to view a picture of the side-wall.](#)

5. What tires will Continental provide as replacements?

[ContiTrac AS Contact P245/75R16](#)
[Grabber AW P255/70R16](#)
[Ameri 660 AS P255/70R16](#)

How many tires are involved?

There are approximately 140,000 Original Equipment tires on 1998 and 1999 Lincoln Navigators eligible for replacement. There are also 20,000 tires in the replacement market.

6. Where can I take my vehicle to get the replacement tires?

We encourage owners of 1998 and 1999 Lincoln Navigators with ContiTrac AS 16" tires to see their local Lincoln dealer for tire inspection and, if necessary, free tire replacement.

7. Are these tires safe?

Yes. Consumers can and should have complete confidence in the safety

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of these tires. There have been no reports of roll-overs, serious accidents or serious injuries involving these tires. We have undertaken this program to avoid the possibility, however slim, of minor vehicle body damage.

8. How can I get more information?

We can be reached by toll-free number - 1-800 TIRE-FIX (847-3349) or by email at tirefix@gentire.com. Customers can also contact Lincoln at 1-800-521-4140 or at cacredirect@customersupportct.com for information on the service action and tire safety.

9. Why is Continental General Tire voluntarily replacing these tires?

We are doing this because consumer satisfaction is our highest priority. Our review process has determined that some 16" ContiTrac AS tires experienced a condition called "belt lift" at the shoulder area of the tire, a condition which may affect belt durability. Under certain conditions, eventually this belt lift could cause a section of the belt and tread to detach from the tire carcass, and tire fragments could cause minor vehicle body damage.

Our review process has identified this condition in tires made prior to March, 1998, and we are taking this pro-active step for consumers.

10. Will drivers notice symptoms when driving?

Drivers may notice noise or vibration while driving or irregular wear or appearance.

11. Do you know what caused the problem?

Our engineers have determined that belt lift is caused by heat stress on the shoulder area of the tire, which can affect tire durability. Several factors, including overloading and underinflation can increase heat stress concentration on the shoulders.

12. Did you make any changes in the design or manufacturing process to address the problem?

The warranty adjustment data and property damage claims data clearly demonstrate that the condition exists only in 16" ContiTrac AS tires manufactured prior to March of 1998. At that time, before data indicated increased warranty claims and before the belt lift condition was manifest, Continental General Tire made modifications in the manufacturing process of the tire, changing the profile of the extruded tread. The changes were made to improve the uniformity of the tire and we have seen that it also increased the ability of this tire to handle heat stress that normally affects tire durability.

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