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Overview with information about winter tyres obligation in Europe. It is indicated per country what the legislation sets outs with regard to winter tyres, spikes and snow chains.

We would like to refer to our letter of October 2006 in which we set out the definition of winter tyres with regard to the German traffic regulations and the thereto pertaining winter tyres obligation. Herein it is also explained what the concrete definition of winter tyres is.

Snow tyres definition

In the media, the regulations regarding the appropriate tyres are usually explained as the obligation to use snow tyres in Germany. It is indeed expected that the current regulations, which make it compulsory for drivers to adjust their tyres to weather conditions, will result in the obligation to have snow tyres. Over the past few months, there have been discussions about which tyres are considered appropriate snow tyres in this context and about the concrete definition of snow tyres. At this moment, there is no legally prescribed definition of snow tyres. However, the ECE regulation no. 30 of the EU directive 92/23 and § 36 of the German Strassenverkehrs-ZulassungsOrdnung do state that snow tyres should always carry the indication M+S, M&S or M.S. This would mean that all tyres with an M+S indication (including some summer tyres) are considered appropriate snow tyres. Snow tyres should also have a minimum tread of 4 mm.

M+S tyres with snowflake symbol

Some tyre manufacturers decided to add the snowflake symbol to their M+S indication. The use of the snowflake symbol on snow tyres is currently only compulsory in the United States and Canada. In the EU, it is only a voluntary indication that is not regulated by law. However, established US tests have shown that tyres with the

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snowflake symbol have 10% more traction on a snowy road surface than tyres without this symbol. The meaning of the snowflake symbol is also unmistakable to both tyre expert and consumer. The snowflake symbol is also sometimes used as part of the so-called 4-seasons symbol. This symbol does not reflect anything about the tyre's qualification as a snow tyre. A 4-seasons tyre with such a symbol can only be considered as a snow tyre if the tyre is also showing M+S in combination with the snowflake symbol (separately).

VACO advice

This does not mean that snow tyres without these symbols automatically have fewer or no snow tyre characteristics at all. They may still be considered as snow tyres under German or European traffic regulations. Nevertheless, after extensive discussions with the German sector association BRV and with a view to the new German StVO legislation and its consequences for your customers, VACO recommends only to sell tyres with both the M+S indication and snowflake symbol as snow tyres.

ALBANIA

Winter tyres:

Albania does not have legislation concerning the use of winter tyres.

Snow chains:

Having snow chains aboard is compulsory between 1 November and 30 April.

The chains must be assembled on the driving axles of the trucks and on all driven wheels of trailers and semi-trailers.

ANDORRA

Winter tyres:

Andorra does not have legislation concerning the use of winter tyres.

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Snow chains:

By means of a traffic signal along the roadside it is indicated as to whether the assembly of snow chains is compulsory.

ARMENIA

Winter tyres:

Armenia does not have legislation concerning the use of winter tyres. Drivers are nonetheless recommended to assemble tyres which are adapted to the wintery weather conditions.

Snow chains:

Snow chains are not compulsory. Basically they are not required on the main roads of the lower situated regions. Specific roads in the mountainous regions can, however, be closed due to snowfall during a certain period of time. If they are nonetheless used, they must be assembled on the driving axle.

AUSTRIA

Winter tyres:

For vehicles in the categories M2 and M3 (passenger transport of more than eight passengers) it is **compulsory** to at least have winter tyres on the driving axle from 1 November up to 15 March. With regard to vehicle categories N2 and N3 (goods transport with a GVW of more than 3.5 tons) this is **compulsory** from 1 November up to 15 April.

In case of wintery weather conditions (snow, sleet or ice) winter tyres must be assembled on each axle of vehicles with a GVW of 3.5 tons or less (M1/N1) as from 1 November up to 15 April or, alternatively, snow chains on the driving axle. The latter is only allowed if the roads are covered with a layer of snow or black ice. Fines can vary between € 35.00 and € 5,000.00, depending on the extent to which other road users are hindered.

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The profile of summer tyres must at least amount to 2 mm. A minimum profile depth of 4 mm applies to radial tyres and 5 mm to diagonal tyres. In case of tyres of commercial vehicles this amounts to 5 and 6 mm, respectively.

Spikes:

Tyres with spikes can only be used in case of vehicles with a GVW not exceeding 3.5 tons from 1 October up to and including 31 May. A speed limit of 100 km/hr on motorways and 80 km/hr on other roads then applies.

Snow chains:

Vehicles in the categories M2, M3, N2 and N3 must **compulsory** have two snow chains for the benefit of the driving axle aboard from 1 November up to 15 April.

With regard to passenger cars with summer tyres it is recommended to always have snow chains for the driving axle available in the car.

Snow chains (or winter tyres) must compulsory be assembled if prescribed by means of a traffic sign. Tyres with spikes must also be provided with snow chains.

The chains must at least be assembled on two wheels of the same driving axle and must comply with the Austrian ÖNORM V5117, V5119 or V5121. Products from member countries of the European Union, provided with an EC number, are also allowed.

BELGIUM

Winter tyres:

The use of winter tyres is not compulsory. If the speed coding of the winter tyres is not sufficient for the speed of the car these tyres cannot be used in the period from 1 April up to 30 October.

Spikes:

Tyres with spikes are allowed from 1 November up to and including 31 March, with a speed limit of 90 km/hr on motorways and 60 km/hr on other roads, for vehicles with a GVW of 3.5 tons or less.

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Snow chains:

Snow chains are not compulsory, but are allowed in case of snow and black ice.

BOSNIA HERZEGOVINA

Winter tyres

The use of winter tyres is compulsory in the period from 15 November up to 15 April.
As an alternative to summer tyres, snow chains can also be assembled.

Spikes:

The use of tyres with spikes is not allowed.

Snow chains

Between 1 November and 15 April it is compulsory to have winter equipment aboard the vehicle. The winter equipment consists of snow chains and a shovel.

At least one set of chains must be assembled on the driving axle.

BULGARIA

Winter tyres:

Bulgaria does not have legislation concerning the use of winter tyres.

Spikes:

The use of tyres with spikes is not allowed.

Snow chains:

It is compulsory to have snow chains aboard between 1 November and 31 March. At least one set for the driven wheels.

Snow chains must be used if this is indicated by a traffic sign.

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CROATIA

Winter tyres:

In wintery weather conditions the vehicle must have at least 2 winter tyres (M+S) on the driving axle or summer tyres with radial carcass on all wheels. The minimum profile amounts to 4 mm.

Spikes:

The use of tyres with spikes is not allowed.

Snow chains:

It is compulsory to have snow chains aboard the vehicle. At least a set for the tyres on the driving axle. Snow chains must be used if required by the weather conditions (at least 5 cm of snow or in case of black ice).

The compulsory winter equipment consists of a set of snow chains on the driving axle and a shovel.

CZECH REPUBLIC

Winter tyres:

The use of winter tyres can be rendered compulsory by means of a traffic sign along the roadside in the period from 1 November up to 1 April.

The following unique traffic signs are used in the Czech Republic to indicate the start and the end of the obligation.



Spikes:

The use of tyres with spikes is not allowed.

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Snow chains:

The use of snow chains can be rendered compulsory by means of a traffic sign. A set of chains must be assembled on the driving axle. In case of a combination two sets of chains are compulsory. Maximum speed 50 km/hr.



It is compulsory to have snow chains aboard vehicles with a GVW exceeding 7.5 tons.

DENMARK

Winter tyres:

Denmark does not have legislation concerning the use of winter tyres.

Spikes:

Tyres with spikes, with a speed limit of 110 km/hr on motorways and 80 km/hr on other roads, are allowed from 1 November up to and including 1 April. All tyres must be equipped with spikes. In case of double assembly, at least one of the two tyres.

Snow chains:

The use of winter tyres is allowed.

ESTONIA

Winter tyres:

The use of winter tyres is **compulsory** in Estonia from 1 December up to and including the end of February. If required by the weather conditions an obligation regarding winter tyres may also apply beyond of the aforementioned period.

Spikes:

The use of tyres with spikes is, with a speed limit of 90 km/hr, allowed from 1 November up to 1 May. The use is limited to vehicles with a GVW not exceeding 3.5 tons and must be assembled on all wheels. Also under the trailer.

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Snow chains:

It is not compulsory to have snow chains aboard the vehicle.

FINLAND

Winter tyres:

Winter tyres are **compulsory** from 1 December up to the end of February for **all** vehicles with a GVW not exceeding 3.5 tons. In this period the profile must at least be 3 mm.

Spikes:

Tyres with spikes are allowed, with a speed limit of 100 km/hr on motorways and 80 km/hr on other roads, from 1 November up to and including 31 March or up to the first Monday after Easter. All four wheels must be equipped with spikes.

Snow chains:

It is not compulsory to have snow chains aboard the vehicle.

FRANCE

Winter tyres:

France does not dispose of a general obligation concerning the assembly of winter tyres. In case of an accident the lack of winter tyres constitutes an important argument for the allocation of the responsibility for the damage.

On specific roads the use of winter tyres may be rendered compulsory. This is then indicated along the roadside by means of traffic signs.

Spikes:

Tyres with spikes are allowed from 11 November up to and including 31 March for vehicles with a GVW of 3.5 tons or less which transport goods (maximum allowed speed 80 km/hr). The prefects may allow deviations for vehicles with a GVW of more than 3.5 tons which transport essential products, perishable merchandise or hazardous goods (maximum allowed speed 60 km/hr).

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Snow chains:

It is not compulsory to have snow chains aboard. Chains are allowed on snow-covered roads, regardless of the period.

Assembly is compulsory on some mountain passes. This is indicated by means of the traffic sign **B26**: *'équipements spéciaux obligatoires'*. If the traffic sign **B26** is accompanied by a sub-sign with the indication: *'pneus à neige admis'*, the compulsory use of snow chains for vehicles of which at least two wheels of the driving axle are equipped with winter tyres or tyres with spikes expires.

The number of chains has not been described precisely. Article 9 of the decree of 18 July 1985 states: *'removable anti-grid systems must guarantee the departure, the control and the braking of the vehicle'*.

On the French access road to the Mont Blanc tunnel it is compulsory to have snow chains aboard between 1 October and 30 April.

GEORGIA

Snow chains:

Snow chains are compulsory on specific road sections: on the mountain passes of Choloki and Rikoti, on the road from Sarpi (Turkey-Georgia) to Batumi-Tbilisi. On the mountain pass of Jvari on the road from Larsi (Russia-Georgia) to Tbilisi.

The snow chains must only be assembled on the driving axle.

GERMANY

Winter tyres:

On 1 May 2006 the amendment of the German traffic regulations (the Strassenverkehrsordnung or StVO) and the thereto pertaining so called winter tyres obligation entered into force. In case of motor vehicles the equipment should be adapted to the weather conditions. This particularly includes suitable tyres and anti-

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freezing preparation in the windshield wiper installation. This regulation does not apply to trailers and caravans.

In case unsuitable tyres are used a driver is in violation and risks a fine of at most € 40.00. Moreover, involvement in a traffic accident beyond the own culpability may lead to joint liability as a result of which the civil liability insurance only covers 70 to 80% of the damage in some instances. Use of unsuitable tyres can moreover be considered 'gross negligence' so that the all-risk insurance may refuse payment.

Spikes:

The use of tyres with spikes is not allowed.

Snow chains:

Chains must be assembled on the tyres of the driving axle of the towing vehicle if this is prescribed by means of a traffic sign (regulation only applies to vehicles with more than two wheels). The maximum speed can at most amount to 50 km/hr. Snow chains are allowed on trailers if the towing vehicle is equipped with the same.

GREECE

Winter tyres:

Greece does not have legislation concerning the use of winter tyres.

Spikes:

The use of tyres with spikes is allowed in case of wintery weather conditions.

Snow chains:

Snow chains can be used if the weather conditions require this.

HUNGARY

Winter tyres:

Hungary does not have legislation concerning the use of winter tyres.

Spikes:

Tyres with spikes cannot be used on the road in Hungary.

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Snow chains:

It is compulsory to have snow chains aboard the vehicle in case of wintery weather conditions. If the traffic sign “snow chains compulsory” is placed at the border crossing point, only vehicles with sufficient snow chains aboard can enter Hungary. After assembly of the snow chains the speed is limited to 50 km/hr.

The chains must be assembled on at least one driving axle. In case of unnecessary use (on a dry road) the driver is fined.

ICELAND

Winter tyres:

The use of winter tyres is compulsory from 1 November up to 14 April. These dates may differ from year to year.

IRELAND

Winter tyres:

Ireland does not have legislation concerning the use of winter tyres.

Spikes:

Tyres with spikes can be used with a speed limit of 112 km/hr on motorways and 96 km/hr on other roads.

Snow chains:

In Ireland the use of snow chains is allowed in case of wintery weather conditions.

ITALY

Winter tyres:

Italy does not dispose of a general obligation concerning the assembly of winter tyres. In case of an accident the lack of winter tyres constitutes an important argument for the allocation of the responsibility for the damage.

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The use of winter tyres (or snow chains) may be rendered compulsory on specific roads. This is indicated along the roadside by means of traffic signs.

Spikes:

Tyres with spikes are, with a speed limit of 120 km/hr on motorways and 90 km/hr on other roads, allowed for vehicles with a GVW of 3.5 tons or less from 15 November up to and including 15 March.

Snow chains:

It is not compulsory to have chains aboard the vehicle, except in the Alps (Aosta valley) where it is compulsory to have chains aboard between 15 October and 30 April. In the rest of Italy a vehicle must be equipped with snow chains (or winter tyres all-round) if this is indicated by means of traffic signs.

Snow chains must compulsory be assembled on the driving axle of the vehicle.

LATVIA

Winter tyres:

In Latvia winter tyres are **compulsory** for **all** vehicles with a GVW of less than 3.5 tons as from 1 December up to 1 March.

Spikes:

The use of tyres with spikes is allowed from 1 October up to 1 May.

Snow chains:

It is not compulsory to have snow chains aboard the vehicle.

LITHUANIA

Winter tyres:

The use of winter tyres is **compulsory** for **all** vehicles up to and including a GVW of 3.5 tons from 10 November up to 1 April.

The minimum profile of the tyres according to the category of the vehicle:

- M2 2 mm (from 10 November up to 1 April = 3 mm);

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-
- M3 2 mm;
 - N2 and N3 1 mm;
 - O3 and O4 1 mm (trailers).

Spikes:

The use of tyres with spikes is allowed from 1 November up to and including 31 March.

Snow chains:

It is not compulsory to have snow chains aboard the vehicle.

LUXEMBURG

Winter tyres:

The use of winter tyres is not compulsory. However, in case unsuitable tyres are used in wintry weather conditions and other road users are consequently hindered one risks to be fined € 145.00. In case of an accident the lack of winter tyres constitutes an important argument for the allocation of the responsibility for the damage.

If the speed coding of the winter tyres is not sufficient for the speed of the car, these tyres cannot be used in the period from 1 April up to 30 October.

Spikes:

Tyres with spikes can be used, with a speed limit, from 1 December up to and including 31 March. This applies to vehicles with a GVW of 3.5 tons or less, but also to special vehicles and buses.

Snow chains:

Chains can only be used in case of snow- or ice-covered roads.

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MACEDONIA

Winter tyres:

Winter tyres are not compulsory. If they are nonetheless used, the profile must at least be 5 mm. If the vehicle is equipped with winter tyres the assembly of chains is not compulsory in city traffic.

Spikes:

The use of tyres with spikes is not allowed.

Snow chains:

Snow chains must be aboard the vehicle between 15 October and 15 March. Beyond this period there is no obligation whatsoever, only in case of exceptional snowfall. They must be assembled on the driving axle of the towing vehicle. They are not required for trailers or semi-trailers.

MOLDAVIA

Winter tyres:

Moldavia does not have legislation concerning the use of winter tyres.

Spikes:

The use of tyres with spikes is not allowed.

Snow chains:

Moldavia does not have legislation concerning the use of snow chains.

MONTENEGRO

Winter tyres:

Winter tyres must have a profile of at least 4 mm.

Spikes:

The use of tyres with spikes is not allowed.

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NETHERLANDS

Winter tyres:

The Netherlands does not have legislation concerning the use of winter tyres.

Spikes:

The use of tyres with spikes is not allowed.

Snow chains:

The use of chains on the road is prohibited.

NORWAY

Winter tyres:

In case of wintry weather conditions all vehicles must have winter tyres (with or without spikes), with a minimum profile of 3 mm. As an alternative summer tyres with snow chains also suffice.

The regulation does **not apply** to **foreign vehicles** however it is strongly recommended to also assemble winter tyres in connection with the liability in case of accidents.

Spikes

The use of tyres with spikes is prohibited between the first Monday after Easter Monday and 31 October, except if required by weather conditions. In Nordland, Troms and Finnmark the use is allowed between 15 October and 1 May with a speed limit of 90 km/hr on motorways and 80 km/hr on other roads. The authorities may grant exceptions to these rules. Only M+S tyres can be provided with spikes. Spikes must, in case of vehicles with a GVW less than 3.5 tons, be placed on all tyres.

Snow chains:

The use is prohibited between the first Monday after Easter Monday and 31 October, except if required by weather conditions. In Nordland, Troms and Finnmark the use is allowed between 15 October and 1 May. The authorities may grant exceptions to these rules.

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In case of a vehicle with a GVW of more than 3.5 tons at least three chains must be assembled: one on the front wheel and two on the driving axle. A vehicle with double assembly wheels must have four chains on the driving axle.

Combinations of which each element has a GVW of more than 3.5 tons and of which the driving axle is equipped with double wheels must have at least seven chains: one on the front wheel, one on each wheel of the driving axle and two on the trailer.

If the driving axle is equipped with single wheels or if double chains are used, five chains suffice.

POLAND

Winter tyres:

There is no specific legislation for winter tyres. Nonetheless article 66.1 of the Act on Road Traffic determines that each and every vehicle must be constructed, equipped and maintained in a manner that the use thereof neither jeopardises the passengers nor the other road users.

Spikes:

The use of tyres with spikes is not allowed.

Snow chains:

It is not compulsory to have snow chains aboard the vehicle. The use of chains is, however, compulsory if indicated by means of a traffic sign. An extra indication under the traffic sign indicates which vehicles are subject to this obligation.

Snow chains must be assembled on at least two driven wheels.

PORTUGAL

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Portugal does not have legislation concerning the use of winter tyres.

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Spikes:

The use of tyres with spikes is not allowed.

Snow chains:

The use of snow chains is compulsory for all vehicles on roads where this is indicated by means of a traffic sign. Snow chains must be assembled on the driving axle of the vehicle.

ROMANIA

Winter tyres:

Romania does not have legislation concerning the use of winter tyres. The profile of winter tyres must at least amount to 2 mm. Vehicles with a GVW exceeding 12 tons may be subject to a driving ban in case of wintery weather conditions.

Spikes:

The use of tyres with spikes is not allowed.

Snow chains:

Even though it is not compulsory to have snow chains aboard the vehicle, the use may be rendered compulsory in case of wintery weather conditions.

RUSSIA

Winter tyres:

Russia does not have legislation concerning the use of winter tyres.

Spikes:

Russia does not have legislation concerning the use of tyres with spikes.

Snow chains:

Snow chains are not compulsory.

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SERBIA

Winter tyres:

Winter tyres must have a profile of at least 4 mm.

Spikes:

The use of tyres with spikes is not allowed.

SLOVAKIA

Winter tyres:

Slovakia does not dispose of a general obligation concerning the assembly of winter tyres. In case of an accident the lack of winter tyres constitutes an important argument for the allocation of the responsibility for the damage.

Spikes:

The use of tyres with spikes is not allowed.

Snow chains:

It is not compulsory to have snow chains aboard the vehicle.

SLOVENIA

Winter tyres:

Winter equipment is **compulsory** for **all** motor vehicles, also for foreign vehicles, from 15 November up to 15 March. During this period, if required by the weather conditions, winter tyres must be assembled or the vehicle must be equipped with summer tyres with snow chains. In case of wintry weather conditions the obligation concerning winter tyres or snow chains can also be imposed beyond the aforementioned period.

The minimum profile for winter tyres and summer tyres amounts to 3 mm.

Minimum requirement for motor vehicles and combinations exceeding 3.5 tons: winter tyres on the driving axle or summer tyres in combination with chains on the driving axle.

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Spikes:

The use of tyres with spikes is not allowed.

Snow chains:

Snow chains must compulsory be present in the car if summer tyres have been assembled.

Four by four vehicles must be equipped with chains on the rear axle.

A shovel must be available aboard each vehicle.

SPAIN

Winter tyres:

With a traffic sign along the roadside it is indicated that winter tyres (or snow chains) are compulsory.

Spikes:

Tyres with spikes can only be used as from 15 November up to and including 31 March. Use only in case of snow- or ice-covered surface.

Snow chains:

See text above.

SWEDEN

Winter tyres:

In case of wintery weather conditions it is compulsory to have winter tyres with a minimum profile depth of 3 mm assembled under vehicles with a GVW up to and including 3.5 tons in the period from 1 December up to and including 31 March. Via the link www.stro.se/winter/vinter071001e.pdf a list is provided of the brands/types of winter tyres which are accepted as such by the Swedish authorities.

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The regulation does **not apply** to **foreign vehicles** however it is strongly recommended to also assemble winter tyres in connection with the liability in case of accidents.

Spikes:

The use of tyres with spikes is allowed from 1 October up to 30 April. If a motor vehicle is equipped with tyres with spikes, the trailer must be equipped accordingly.

Snow chains:

As an alternative to winter tyres snow chains can also be assembled (on all tyres).

SWITZERLAND

Winter tyres:

Switzerland does not dispose of a general obligation concerning the assembly of winter tyres. In case of an accident the lack of winter tyres constitutes an important argument for the allocation of the responsibility for the damage.

The use of winter tyres can be rendered compulsory on specific roads. This is indicated along the roadside by means of traffic signs.

Spikes:

Tyres with spikes are allowed on vehicles of which the gross weight amounts to a maximum of 3.5 tons (OETC articles 61-62), with a speed limit of 80 km/hr, from 1 November up to 30 April. Spikes must be placed on all four wheels.

Snow chains:

The use of snow chains is compulsory on roads indicated as such by means of a corresponding traffic sign. A period has not been specified as in the Alps snowfall can even occur in summer. At least two driven wheels of the same axle or one on each side (in case of double wheels) must be equipped with metal snow chains or comparable systems made of a different material yet approved by the Federal Road Agency (OSR article 29).

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TURKEY

Winter tyres:

Turkey does not have legislation concerning the use of winter tyres.

Spikes:

The use of tyres with spikes is not allowed.

Snow chains:

It is compulsory to have snow chains aboard the vehicle.

UKRAINE

Winter tyres:

Ukraine does not have legislation concerning the use of winter tyres.

Spikes:

Ukraine does not have legislation concerning the use of tyres with spikes.

Snow chains:

It is not compulsory to have snow chains aboard the vehicle.

UNITED KINGDOM

Winter tyres:

The United Kingdom does not have legislation concerning the use of winter tyres.

Spikes:

The use of tyres with spikes is basically allowed. Condition is that the tyres with spikes may not damage the road surface.

Snow chains:

Snow chains can only be used on snow- or ice-covered roads.

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SOURCE: - VACO

- Important information about winter tyres (see www.vandenban.nl)

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