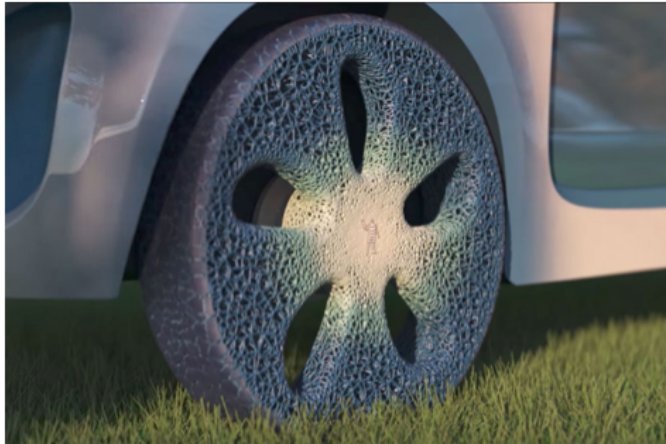


The Uber-Adaptable Airless Tire

By: Lisa Eadicicco

In the future, our cars will be smart, and our tires will be smarter. At least, that's what tire maker Michelin thinks. Its Vision concept - unveiled this year to demonstrate the potential of tire technology - certainly makes a compelling case. For starters, it's COMPLETELY airless, eliminating the need to worry about pounds per square inch. It's also made from recycled materials in an effort to reduce waste. But, the most impressive feature may be its 3-D printed treads, which can be swapped in and out to accommodate various road conditions - without changing the tire itself.



There are some problems with the new tire. "One challenge will be figuring out how to swap the treads quickly," says Terry Gettys, who helped lead the project, "because consumers will want their tires ready in just a few minutes." Michelin estimates that a tire this advanced may still be 20 years away too. "Someone may come along and make something similar before we're completely finished."

To accommodate the ever-changing market, Michelin may incorporate some features over the next few years. "We think we can develop an airless tire soon and we hope to have sensors that flag drivers if their treads are wearing down." Michelin hopes consumers will enjoy the new changes and will be willing to pay a little bit more for future tires.