



Ease Gas Pump Pains by Replacing Old Habits with New Ones

CCNS - Gas pump prices remain on their roller-coaster ride, with more ups than downs. They're hard on the budget and beyond consumers' control. With some changes in our daily habits, however, we can compensate, at least partially, for rising fuel costs. Adhering to your errand list, thereby eliminating an extra trip to the store for a forgotten item, saves miles and dollars. (U.S. Department of Transportation reports 63% of all trips are 5 miles or less)

Beyond sensible trip planning and conservative driving, several conditions under the hood and around the car can be corrected to conserve gas. "Under inflated tires waste fuel," says Rich White, spokesman for the Car Care Council. "You can improve your gas mileage by about 3% just by maintaining proper tire pressure, a factor that's high on the failure rate in our National Car Care Month check lanes.

"Chalk up another 10% for a clogged air filter plus a conservative 4% for engine malfunctions such as worn spark plugs and faulty fuel and emission control systems. Correcting these conditions can improve mileage by as much as 40%!"

Among other fuel wasters are dirty oil, a malfunctioning automatic transmission and a cooling system thermostat that keeps the engine running cold. Engines are designed to operate within a specific temperature range for optimum efficiency.

Slow down! According to the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency and the Oak Ridge National Laboratory, a vehicle loses about one percent in fuel economy for each one mile per hour driven above 55 m.p.h. Although this formula should be adjusted for different car models and ages, consider that that a car which averages 30 miles per gallon at 55 m.p.h. would get 28.5 m.p.g. at 60 m.p.h., 27 m.p.g. at 65 m.p.h., and 25.5 m.p.g. at 70 m.p.h.

A final consideration: according to the U.S. Department of Energy, if 145 million passenger vehicles idle for five minutes a day, which is not unusual considering the numerous drive-in facilities throughout our nation, approximately four million gallons of gasoline are consumed. That's gas being wasted, going nowhere. Idling is sometimes necessary in traffic jams, but while waiting at drive-in windows, or to pick up a passenger it's more economical to cut the engine if the wait is longer than 30 seconds. Starting up your car again actually uses less gasoline.

"Breaking old habits doesn't come easily," concludes White. "Being car care aware, on

the other hand, is a habit that should be easy to form. The incentives are there in dollars and cents.”

The Car Care Council is the source of information for the “Be Car Care Aware” consumer education campaign, providing information about the benefits of proper vehicle maintenance and repair. For more information visit www.carcare.org.

