

Simple Fuel Efficiency

Contributed by Randy Bisenz
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As gas prices have skyrocketed more and more of us are looking for ways to minimize our fuel usage. Almost everyone I know has cut down on their driving to one extent or another, but still we cringe when we have to fill it up a couple of times to make it to that wedding or graduation that we can not miss. Since most of you are not in a position to scurry down to your local car dealership and buy the latest super hybrid fuel miser I thought you might appreciate some less expensive options to increasing how much value you are getting for your fuel dollar.

Superior maintenance maximizes fuel efficiency

It is amazing to hear someone complaining about gas prices and then balks at spending the money to give their car a tune-up. When ignition components become worn mileage drops significantly. A clogged air filter or PCV valve can destroy good fuel efficiency.

Most of these items are fairly easy to service yourself. Replace your air filter and PCV valve frequently. Make sure the spark plugs and wires are in good condition. If your engine has a distributor make sure that the rotor and cap are in free of corrosion or wear.

A vehicle in good tune may get 25-40% better mileage than one that is in need of maintenance.

Help your engine to breath better

Just like you your engine works much more efficiently when it can breathe more easily. Try a high flow air filter like the ones made by K & N. Consider replacing your muffler with a more efficient type like the Aero Turbine. These two simple modifications may increase your gas mileage by up to 15%. Your investment of about \$225 for both of these items will have paid for itself by the end-of-the-year.

Get more value at the pump

Have you noticed that when an article appears in the media about oil prices going up that within hours your local service station has raised it prices as well? Since there is about a six months delay between when an oil company purchases oil and when the refined gasoline or diesel is sold at the pump this increase has nothing to do with the actual cost of fuel, but rather what the retailer thinks they can get away with charging. The appropriate term for this practice is price gouging. This only succeeds if the consumer refuses to change their purchasing habits and continues to buy the same amount from the same people regardless of price.

Unfortunately, most consumers think they are powerless to do anything about these price increases. However, if you look around you can usually find one or two stations that don't raise their prices quite as much as the others. If everyone truly shopped around and consistently bought from the lowest priced retailer then other retailers would be forced to compete to stay in business. Attempt to reduce your fuel usage when prices spike. Buy more fuel at a time when prices are lower. The "free market" only works if you force it too by insisting on the lowest price for commodities like gasoline and diesel. This is the only way to stimulate the competition required to reduce or eliminate price gouging.

Buy fuel not fumes

Gasoline and diesel are highly evaporative and when a portion of your fuel is transformed into vapor it is usually lost into

the atmosphere before your engine can use it. At the very least vapor displaces fuel so that the same volume actually contains less fuel. There are a number of strategies that can reduce vapor loss and maximize how much of the fuel you purchase is available to your engine. This in turn translates into more mileage for your fuel dollar.

1. Buy your fuel as early in the day as possible. As temperatures rise more fuel turns into vapor. The more activity at a station the more the fuel is agitated, which in turn causes more vapors. When the stations first open in the morning is when there is the least percentage of vapors in the fuel that is being pumped into your tank.

2. Never buy fuel when the station is refueling. Refueling causes a great deal of agitation, which turns more of the fuel into vapor.

3. Have your gas pumped as slowly as possible. The faster fuel is pumped the more it is agitated, and agitation turns fuel into vapor. The pumping equipment does not differentiate very well between a gallon of fuel and a gallon of vapor. The faster your fuel is pumped the larger the percentage of vapor in each gallon.

4. Keep your tank as full as possible. As tanks empty evaporation increases. A full tank has very little surface exposed to air, which greatly reduces evaporation.

I hope these tips save you some money and gas!

If you have not yet read the essay [The Great Biofuel Hoax of 2008](#) this might be a good time to check it out. In addition to becoming an environmental and humanitarian disaster, biofuels will decrease your fuel economy.