

High Gas Prices Got You Down?

by ARA

The recent spike in gasoline prices is causing a shift in car-buying habits and increased interest in alternate fuels. But there are plenty of every-day, basic strategies consumers can employ to ease the burden of higher gasoline prices. The following advice is from the pros at the non-profit National Institute for Automotive Service Excellence (ASE), who note that these conservation tips will not only save gasoline, they'll help extend the life of your vehicle and its components.

Sensible driving and keeping your vehicle well maintained will help you get better gas mileage. * Monitor your tires. Under inflated tires or poorly aligned wheels waste fuel by forcing the engine to work harder, wasting about 3 percent of your fuel economy. Out-of-line wheels, as evidenced by uneven tread wear, should be aligned by a professional.

* Observe speed limits. Speeding decreases your miles per gallon. As a rule of thumb, mileage begins to decline sharply above 60 mph or so. Fuel savings can range from five percent to 33 percent.

* Drive gently. Sudden accelerations guzzle gas. Anticipate traffic patterns ahead and adjust your speed gradually. (You'll help your brakes and suspension system last longer, too.)

* Use cruise control and the overdrive gear.

* Remove excess weight. Store only essentials in the trunk. Less weight means better mileage. How much? One to two percent per hundred pounds of excess weight. After family vacations, make sure you remove all unnecessary items including that rooftop cargo carrier, which may not weigh a great deal empty but increases

air drag.

* Use the recommended grade of engine oil to save another percent or two. Consult your owner's manual or speak with your automotive technician.

* A clogged air filter can cause your vehicle to use up to 10 percent more gasoline.

* Follow the service schedules listed in your owner's manual. Replace filters and fluids as recommended; have engine performance problems (rough idling, poor acceleration, etc.) corrected at a repair facility. Given today's high-tech engines, it's wise to have this type of work done by auto technicians who are ASE certified in engine performance.

* Keep your engine operating at its peak efficiency. A faulty oxygen sensor can decrease your mpg by up to 40 percent. Less serious problems may cost you four percent. The lesson is clear: a well-maintained engine will help you maximize the gas mileage for your specific make and model.

* Avoid excessive engine idling. Shut off your vehicle while waiting for friends and family.

* Consolidate your daily trips and errands.

Routine maintenance and less aggressive driving will go a long way to reducing the pain you feel at the pump.

The National Institute for Automotive Service Excellence (ASE) was founded in 1972 as a non-profit, independent organization dedicated to improving the quality of automotive service and repair through the voluntary testing and certification of automotive technicians. ASE-certified technicians wear blue and white ASE shoulder insignia and carry credentials listing their exact area(s) of certification. Their employers often display the blue and white ASE sign. Visit www.ase.com for more information.

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