



Green Driving



Buying green is just the first step in reducing the environmental impacts of your automobile use. Reducing greenhouse gases, improving gas mileage and keeping your vehicle longer are all important in greening the highways. Since not everyone can get an electric car, the rest of us must work with the vehicles we have. Whether you own a coupe, sedan, minivan, SUV or truck, there are plenty of steps you can take to green your driving and get more out of your vehicle.

BEST PRACTICE AREA: GREENHOUSE GAS REDUCTION

DID YOU KNOW?

Americans use 400 million gallons of gasoline per day. That's enough gasoline to fill Lake George with nearly 7 feet of gasoline every *hour*.

CAREFUL FILL-UPS:

- **Use regular gasoline.** Unless your owner's manual says to use a premium, higher octane fuel, it will improve neither fuel economy or performance and will only waste money.
- **Don't try to "top-off" or overfill your tank.** Spilled gasoline evaporates to aggravate smog formation and can leak into groundwater.
- **Check the nozzle.** Patronize gas stations that have vapor-recovery nozzles (those black accordion-style plastic devices attached to the nozzle) whenever you can.

PRUDENT PARKING:

- **Park in the shade.** Parking in the shade can keep your car cool and minimize evaporation of fuel.
- **Park in the garage.** Use your garage as much as possible to keep your car warm in the winter and cool in the summer.
- **Use windshield shades.** If you have to park outside, use windshield shades to cut down on the summer heat and help keep frost off in the winter.

DRIVING GREEN:

- **Avoid "jack rabbit" starts and aggressive driving.** Flooring the gas pedal not only wastes gas, it leads to higher pollution rates.
- **Think ahead.** Anticipate stops and let your vehicle coast down as much as possible.
- **Follow the speed limit!** Driving 75 instead of 65 will lower fuel economy by 10%, and can dramatically increase pollution.
- **Plan your trips.** Plan your trip around rush-hour traffic. Stop-and-go driving burns gas and increases emissions.
- **Combine trips.** Warmed-up engines generate much less air pollution, so combining several short trips into one can make a huge difference.
- **Take a load off.** Carrying an extra 100 pounds reduces fuel economy by 1%.
- **Use overdrive.** If your vehicle has it, use overdrive gear at cruising speeds. When driving a manual transmission, shift up as soon as possible to decrease rpm, fuel use and emissions.
- **Open the windows.** Open the windows to cool off your car before turning on the air conditioner to reduce fuel consumption.
- **Keep it off.** Unlike many older cars and truck, modern vehicles do not need to warm up and have automatic chokes, so you don't need to step on the gas pedal before starting the engine.

MAINTENANCE TIPS:

- **Keep your tires properly inflated.** For every 3 pounds below the recommended air pressure, fuel economy goes down 1%.
- **Buy LLR replacement tires.** Low-rolling-resistance (LLR) tires are designed to improve a vehicle's fuel economy. Standard replacement tires can lower the fuel economy by 4%.
- **Check it yourself.** Check your fuel economy every few weeks. If you notice a slippage, you could have a problem that needs attention.
- **Get a tune-up.** Follow owner's manual guidelines and replace air filter, check spark plugs, brakes, fluids and tire rotation and alignment. Do it yourself or talk to a mechanic.
- **Change the oil.** Every 3,000 miles is the standard, but check the owner's manual to see if you can go longer between changes.
- **Check emissions.** Have the emissions system checked regularly to ensure it is working properly.

"COMMUTER CHOICE" PROGRAMS:

Most Americans commute to work, and now there are special programs for both employees and employers to go green in getting there. The U.S. EPA and DOT are teaming up with businesses to set up "Commuter Choice" programs. These employer-sponsored initiatives often provide extra benefits. Examples include:

- Many companies offer reduced or free bus or transit passes to employees using public transit to get to work.
- Another company offers participating employees monthly drawings for prizes including time off and bicycles.
- A municipality gives its employees an extra hour of time off for every 5 days they carpool to get to work, plus permission to dress casual at the office.

Companies using "Commuter Choice" programs often save money, have happier, healthier employees and retain them longer. Ask your employer if extra benefits are available for greening your commute.

