

NewsStand - As Gas Prices Rise...

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Gasoline prices are climbing again, triggering more than a few memories from my days in New Jersey in the mid-seventies when gas shortages led to high blood pressure and even a few shootings at the gas pumps. We lived in the suburbs then and cars were a way of life for most of us. One morning I went headed off to work and my gas gauge read empty. It was the first time I'd experienced a siphoned tank. My next stop would be an auto parts store where I bought one of those tungsten coil devices which prevented criminals from inserting a hose into the tank.

Instability in Libya (as I write this) and other parts of the world have put a crimp on the supply portion of the America's oil equation. A year ago national averages for a gallon of gas were \$2.75. Yesterday they were \$3.51 and rising.

The pressure is on to improve fuel economy. What's a driver to do?

Historically, the EPA has encouraged consumers to buy more fuel efficient vehicles. For the sake of this discussion let's assume the person driving a larger vehicle has need of the extra space for one reason or another, whether it be six kids, four great danes or a carload of soccer equipment. What are some things they can do to squeeze the most miles out of a gallon of fuel with whatever they are currently driving?

1. **Drive Smoother**

Have you ever ridden with someone who erratically alternates between aggressively speeding up and slowing down, then speeding up and slowing again? Besides being annoying to everyone in the car, it is also a huge drain on gasoline.

2. **Reduce Idling**

The last I checked, idling gets you zero miles per gallon. If you're going to sit more than 20 seconds, you use less gas by shutting the car off and re-starting when you go. (You're excused if the purpose of your idling is to warm up the car when it's 20 below as is often the case in our neck of the woods in January.)

3. **Combine Trips**

It's a matter of planning and makes sense as well. One trip to three stores near the mall will use less gas than three trips, though most plumbing projects require three trips to one store with little you can do about it.

4. **Keep Tires Properly Inflated**

We've all heard this one, and it's valid. Under-inflated tires can lower gas mileage by 0.3 percent for every 1 psi drop in pressure of all four tires. Properly inflated tires are safer and last longer. Is checking tires a routine part of your oil change regimen?

5. **Use A Premium Synthetic Oil**

During its circulation through the engine, motor oil serves to lubricate parts, keep the engine free of deposits, seal the piston rings and valves against leakage of combustion gases, and cool hot internal surfaces. Premium synthetic oils not only prevent excessive wear and deposit buildup, they are also more resistant to the kind of oxidation and deterioration at high temperatures that produces sludge and varnish, thereby making the engine more inefficient.

6. **Keep Engine Interior Clean**

Injectors can be very sensitive to fuel quality. Deposits on fuel injectors can inhibit fuel flow, causing erratic idle, poor acceleration and hard starting. A number of gasoline additives have been introduced to address this problem. Throttle plates and valve stems also need to be clean to operate properly. With gas prices rising it may be a good time to educate customers while gaining an add-on sale that helps meet a real need.

A Few Things That Probably Won't Make A Difference

Catalysts and Magnets

According to the Department of Transport in England, there are all kinds of devices being sold today that offer fuel savings, and most are too good to be true.

Oil Additives

An oil additive could conflict with what's already present in a well formulated oil. Any third party additive may upset the balance of the formulation of the oil and even reduce its protection capabilities of the oil.

You can't manage what you don't measure. If you have customers who want to know, the tips above will help them get through what is shaping up to be a long, hot summer.