Clean Air Driving Tips

The rising cost of fuel affects all of us, as does the quality of the air we breathe. Listed below are several strategies that will reduce the amount of gas we use and reduce air polluting emissions. Many of these strategies can also reduce your personal fuel usage.

Selecting trip-appropriate vehicles ("right-sizing"):

When choosing to purchase a new family vehicle, several things should be taken into consideration:

1. will it accommodate the number of passengers,
2. how will the vehicle be used (in town, long distance travel, or off road),
3. consider hybrid, as it will not only save on fuel, but decreases emissions in the air.

For business purposes, the most efficient vehicle possible should be selected for each staff trip, based on the number of passengers, weight of cargo, and likelihood of off-road use. Vehicles used for general business purposes should default to a compact car. Reserve the big SUV and trucks for hauling a large group of people and big loads. Use a small vehicle for driving alone around town.

Practicing exceptional vehicle maintenance:

Proper maintenance can reduce fuel demand up to 15 percent. Timely preventive maintenance includes regular tune-ups, proper tire inflation, and filter replacements. A tuned engine is important for proper function of spark plugs, fuel system and emission control. An untuned engine can cause wasted fuel costs of 15% or more. Under inflated tires of approximately 8 pounds (quite common) increase rolling resistance of the tires by 5%. This results in wasted gas, which also increases transportation cost.

Link trips and errands:

Combining your errands into one trip helps you get things done faster and it helps reduce fuel usage. When you first start a car after it has been sitting for more than an hour, it pollutes up to five times more than when the engine's warm. Therefore short frequent shops will produce less emissions.

Limit cross town meetings:

Use conference calls and emails to reduce the number of meetings that require driving.

Take mass transit, share a ride or car pool:

Even if you do it just once or twice a week, you'll reduce traffic congestion and

pollution, and save money. The average driver spends about 56 cents per mile including ownership and maintenance.

Stop at the click:

Don't top off the gas tank. It releases gas fumes into the air and cancels the benefits of the pump's anti-pollution devices. So stopping short of a full tank is safer and reduces pollution.

Practice "Smart Driving" habits:

These good driving practices can make a significant difference in fuel efficiency.

1. Gentle and steady acceleration can increase mileage up to 12 percent.
2. Watch your speed. 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, we could say, for example, that a passenger car which averages 30 miles per gallon at 55 m.p.h. would get 27 m.p.g. at 65 m.p.h., and 25.5 m.p.g. at 70 m.p.h.
3. Limit engine idling. Idling is sometimes necessary in traffic jams, but while waiting at drive-in windows, it is more economical to cut the engine if the wait is longer than 30 seconds. Starting up your car again versus making longer multiple stops actually uses less gasoline. Shut off your engine and leave the ignition in the accessory mode when going thru a drive thru restaurant, during long traffic jams, while filling out reports or using a cell phone.
4. Awareness of traffic tie-ups and accidents may allow you to take an alternate route. Listen to the radio stations that carry these frequent road condition reports.
5. Get in your car, adjust the mirror, fasten the seat belt, then start the car. Starting the car first wastes millions of gallons of gasoline each year while adding pollutants into the air.

By following these simple steps, we can ease the strain on our fuel budget and our lungs.