



Federal Trade Commission News

Office of Public Affairs - Consumer Information

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FOR YOUR INFORMATION.....May 19, 2005

The Federal Trade Commission, in cooperation with the American Automobile Association (AAA), reminds consumers that there are things they can do to keep the cost of gasoline from busting budgets or putting the brakes on summer driving plans. With Memorial Day and the travel season just around the corner, the FTC and AAA are putting out a new alert to help consumers get the best mileage from their car, truck, or sports utility vehicles (SUVs).

“We all want to get the most out of our gasoline purchases,” said Lydia Parnes, Director of the FTC’s Bureau of Consumer Protection. “Using fuel efficiently can help you save money.”

The new Consumer Alert, “**Good, Better, Best: How to Improve Gas Mileage**” reminds drivers that staying within posted speed limits and avoiding aggressive driving can actually improve gas mileage. The Alert highlights several ways consumers can improve their gas mileage.

According to the FTC and AAA, consumers can use fuel efficiently if they keep the following tips in mind:

- **Drive more efficiently** – stay within post speed limits; stop aggressive driving; and avoid unnecessary idling. (Gas mileage decreases rapidly at speeds above 60 miles per hour. When driving in town, consumers can improve their gas mileage up to five percent if they avoid “jackrabbit” starts and stops.) Combine errands; use overdrive gears and cruise controls when appropriate; and remove excess weight from the trunk – an extra 100 pounds can reduce a typical car’s fuel economy by up to two percent. Avoid packing items on top of your car – a loaded roof rack or carrier creates wind resistance and can decrease fuel economy by five percent.
- **Maintain your car** – keep the engine tuned, tires properly inflated and aligned, change the oil on schedule, and check and replace air filters regularly. Replacing clogged filters can increase gas mileage up to 10 percent.

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(How to Improve Gas Mileage Alert–05/19/05)

- **Use the proper octane level** – for most cars, the recommended gasoline is regular octane. Using a higher-octane gas than the manufacturer recommends offers no benefit.
- **Check out claims about “gas saving” gadgets** – be skeptical of claims for devices that will “boost your mileage by an extra six miles per gallon,” or “improve your fuel economy up to 26 percent.” Some “gas-saving” devices may actually damage a car’s engine or increase exhaust emissions.

There are also alternatives that consumers may want to consider, advises the FTC and AAA:

- **Alternative fuel vehicles (AFVs)** operate on alternative fuels, such as methanol, ethanol, compressed natural gas, liquefied petroleum gas, electricity, and others designated by the Department of Energy. Find out how many miles a new AFV travels on a tank or supply of fuel because, gallon for gallon, some don’t travel as far as gasoline-powered vehicles.
- **Hybrid electric vehicles** combine the benefits of gasoline engines and electric motors and can be configured to achieve different objectives, such as improved fuel economy and increased power.

Copies of the alert, “Good, Better, Best: How to Improve Gas Mileage” are available from the FTC’s Web site at <http://www.ftc.gov> and also from the FTC’s Consumer Response Center, Room 130, 600 Pennsylvania Avenue, N.W., Washington, D.C. 20580.

The FTC works for the consumer to prevent fraudulent, deceptive, and unfair business practices in the marketplace and to provide information to help consumers spot, stop, and avoid them. To file a complaint in English or Spanish (bilingual counselors are available to take complaints), or to get free information on any of 150 consumer topics, call toll-free, 1-877-FTC-HELP (1-877-382-4357), or use the complaint form at <http://www.ftc.gov/ftc/complaint.htm>. The FTC enters Internet, telemarketing, identity theft, and other fraud-related complaints into Consumer Sentinel, a secure, online database available to hundreds of civil and criminal law enforcement agencies in the U.S. and abroad.

As North America’s largest motoring and leisure travel organization, AAA provides its more than 48 million members with travel, insurance, financial and automotive-related services. Since its founding in 1902, the not-for-profit, fully tax paying AAA has been a leader and advocate for the safety and security of all travelers.

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(How to Improve Gas Mileage Alert–05/19/05)

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