Driving Green: Spring has Sprung, but don't 'Spring Ahead'

Energy Savers Blog

With gas prices skyrocketing, it may be time to evaluate your driving habits. No, I'm not talking about "hypermiling" (going to extreme lengths to get the best fuel economy possible), which can involve some dangerous techniques. (There actually is a Hypermiling Safety Foundation, which advocates *legal* techniques to get the best mileage possible.) You can still "drive green" safely to help save fuel and operating costs. First, of course, you should keep your car well maintained, whatever its age – regular oil changes, tires properly inflated and aligned, engine tuned up and using the proper octane gas. That's the easy part.

Now take a look at your driving habits. If you're already driving economically [1], that's great! If you're not, you can make some simple adjustments to improve your gas mileage. Here are just a few tips to get you started saving $$ at the pump [2].

- Take your time—you get better gas mileage driving between 25 and 65 mph. Don't "spring ahead" (accelerate) or "fall back" (brake) rapidly. Pace yourself between stoplights so you can just cruise through them without stopping (on a green light of course). I get a kick out of seeing the guy (it's almost always a guy) who has raced past me a mile or so back be the car just in front of me at the next light.
- Combine your trips where possible. I love gadgets, and my GPS, which I use almost all the time, though mostly to tell me when I'll get to my destination, will calculate the shortest or fastest route and can include one "via point." It's an older, basic model, and newer ones also have functions that can route you around traffic jams.
- Remove extra weight from your trunk—and don't forget to clear off the snow! Even a few inches of snow on your car can weigh a lot and increase the drag.
- Don't let your car idle more than absolutely necessary—including being

stuck in traffic. Do you know an alternate route you can take if there's an accident or construction on your regular route? (Old joke – Denver has three seasons: football season, ski season and construction season.) It's not always possible—my commute goes through Turkey Creek Canyon (US 285 southwest of Denver), and there IS no other practical way around, and no way to get out. If you're stuck there, you're stuck.

- Don't run the air conditioner more than necessary. Yes, this really works. On one road trip, I turned off the A/C when I was going uphill and back on going downhill. It wasn't off long enough to affect the interior temperature. For that particular leg of the trip, I got 30 mpg—in an older car rated at 24 mpg on the highway.

Some things can't be helped. I really hate driving with the studded snow tires and air conditioning on when the temperatures shoot up to the 70s in March or April (or right after I've put the snow tires on in October). It's only half way through March as I write this; Denver has predicted highs in the 70s all week with snow showers possible next week. Springtime in the Rockies!

Word of the day: **Nempimania** (also Nenpimania) is an obsession with getting the best fuel economy (or the best only-electric range) possible from a hybrid car. It is derived from the Japanese "nempi," meaning fuel economy, and mania, meaning "craze for." (from Wikipedia)

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SOURCE [3]

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