19 Ways to Increase Fleet Fuel Economy

AS FUEL PRICES CONTINUE TO HIT RECORD HIGHS, YOU CAN TAKE ACTIONS TO MAXIMIZE YOUR VEHICLE'S FUEL EFFICIENCY. HERE ARE 19 SUGGESTIONS FOR DRIVERS TO FOLLOW TO INCREASE FUEL ECONOMY. MOST WON'T COST A CENT.

1. Have Drivers Ensure Tires are Inflated to the Correct Pressure

This is the cheapest and easiest way to control fuel expenses and the one most often overlooked. If your drivers don't have a tire gauge, it is worth the expense to buy them one so they can ensure that tires are inflated to the manufacturer's recommended level. One under inflated tire can cut fuel economy by 2 percent per pound of pressure below the proper inflation level. One out of four drivers, on average, drives vehicles with one or more under inflated tires. When a tire is under inflated, let's say by 4 to 5 psi below the manufacturer's recommended tire pressure, vehicle fuel consumption increases by 10 percent and, over the long haul, will cause a 15 percent reduction in tire tread life. Check the vehicle's door post sticker for minimum cold tire inflation pressure.

2. Use the Metro Fuel Card

The fuel card program increases access to fuel vendors, reducing the number of miles a driver must go out of his/her way to fuel at a Metro fuel site. Not only does this reduce fuel consumed, but it reduces the number of miles the vehicle is driven.

This fuel card program provides for purchasing controls to control what drivers purchase. Purchase alerts can be sent via email to the department's fuel coordinator. Specific controls for each card can be setup including:

- Type of fuel purchased - The fuel card restricts driver purchases to only regular unleaded gasoline not more expensive premium and super-unleaded grades of gasoline.
- Quantity of fuel purchased – This restricts the number of gallons of fuel purchased at each transaction.
- Number of transactions per day – This restricts the number of times a card can be used each day.

3. Clean Out the Trunk and Eliminate Unnecessary Weight

Cars, like cargo trucks, get much better mileage when they're not loaded with unnecessary weight. According to AutoZone, every 200 lbs. of additional weight

trims one mile off of fuel efficiency. Most drivers accumulate material in their trunks, much of it unnecessary. Instruct drivers to remove all unnecessary items from the trunk, such as unneeded tools or materials.

4. Avoid Long Idling

The worst mileage a vehicle can get is 0 miles per gallon, which occurs when it idles. Idling for long periods of time, whether at railroad crossing or pulling off the road to make a cell phone call, consumes gas that could be saved by simply turning off the engine. Restarting an engine uses about the same amount of gas as idling for 30 seconds. When idling for longer periods of time, shut off the engine. Prolonged idling creates excess emissions and wastes fuel. However, turning off the engine may disable vehicle features including safety features like airbags. Drivers should be certain to only utilize this strategy in situations where there is no possibility of collision.

5. Monitor Preventive Maintenance Schedules

Bringing the vehicle into an OFM garage for preventive maintenance will increase a vehicle's fuel economy. For example: keep the wheels aligned. Wheels that are fighting each other waste fuel. Keep the air filter clean. A dirty filter clogs an engine's air supply, causing a higher fuel-to-air ratio and thereby increasing gasoline consumption.

6. Make Drivers Energy Conscious

Similar to turning off the lights in unoccupied rooms at home, your drivers should practice energy conservation habits in their vehicles as well. If a vehicle has a trip computer, encourage drivers to use the "instant fuel economy" display to refine driving habits.

7. Use A/C Sparingly

Use the air conditioner only when needed. The air conditioner puts extra load on the engine, forcing more fuel to be used. An air conditioner is one of the biggest drains on engine power and fuel economy. It can reduce gas consumption by 5 to 20 percent, depending on the type of vehicle and the way it is driven. Don't use it as a fan to simply circulate air. If it's just too hot to bear without A/C, try to keep it set at around 72 degrees. Minimize use of air conditioning. Use the vent setting as much as possible.

8. Encourage Carpooling When Appropriate

Encourage drivers to carpool when they know that they will be in the office all day, for meetings or catching up with paperwork.

9. Drive the Posted Speed Limit

Drive at posted speed limits – this is a tip that may save a life as well as fuel. EPA estimates a 10-15 percent improvement by driving 55 instead of 65 mph.

10. Use Cruise Control During Highway Driving

Unnecessary changes in speed are wasteful, and the use of cruise control helps improve fuel economy.

11. Develop a More Efficient Routing Play

If you have vehicles that follow a set daily pattern, efficient routing offers an effective way for fleets to manage fuel expenses. Not only does a routing plan make trips more fuel-efficient, it also increases time efficiency as well. Plan and consolidate trips to bypass congested routes and avoid stop-and-go traffic.

12. When Feasible, Have Two Employees Per Vehicle.

If you have several employees going to the same work location or job site, have them take one vehicle instead of driving separately.

13. Avoid Jackrabbit Starts

A car consumes extra fuel when accelerating. To maximize fuel economy, drivers need to examine their driving habits. Simply limiting acceleration and fast braking can increase fuel economy. When accelerating, pretend you have a fresh egg underneath your right foot. A light, steady pressure helps to minimize the amount of fuel consumed and maintain a more moderate and steady speed.

14. Anticipate Traffic Flow

Anticipate traffic conditions, and accelerate and decelerate smoothly – it's safer, uses less gas, and reduces brake wear. In commuter traffic, which usually involves stop-and-go movement, look for two or more vehicles ahead rather than watching the driver in front of you. This enables you to accelerate and decelerate more gradually. By anticipating a traffic light change, an upcoming stop sign, or the need to slow down for a curve, you can avoid or reduce brake use and save gasoline in the process. Like the "jackrabbit start," the "jackrabbit stop" is a major contributor to inefficient driving.

15. Avoid Aggressive Driving

The largest fuel waste occurs with aggressive driving. Time studies show that fast starts, weaving in and out of traffic, accelerating to and from a stop light doesn't save much time, wastes fuel and wears out components such as brakes

and tires faster. By not driving aggressively, drivers can save up to 20 percent in fuel economy, advises the EPA.

16. Watch your feet

Keep that left foot off the brake, it not only will cause drag thus reducing gas mileage, it also wears your brakes out much faster and it confuses the driver behind you.

17. Use The Correct Grade of Fuel

Many people think they need Premium when Regular will do just fine, expecially owners of “fast” cars. Read the owners manual and use the recommended fuel.

18. Buy Fuel in the Morning

To maximize fuel economy, Kelley Blue Book suggests buying gasoline when the temperature is cold and gasoline is at its densest. Consumers are charged based on volume, not density. Buy gasoline during the coolest time of the day or first thing in the morning. Conversely, heat causes fuel to expand and overflow. Don’t completely fill the gas tank in hot weather.

19. Don’t top off your tank

Stop filling when the automatic shut off engages. Filling the tank up to the filler cap can lead to spilling some fuel, thus wasting it and doing a small part to harm the environment.

Pay attention to the Details

Some of these suggestions may seem slight in the big picture of fleet operation expenses, but paying attention to details will add up to large savings during the course of a year. According to industry experts, if a single driver rigorously adhered to these suggestions, the fuel economy of a vehicle could be increased by approximately 10 percent.