

Fuel Mileage and Other Considerations

Well another International Rally is behind us, and we are half way through the summer. It has been a busy time but one that has provided an opportunity to make new friends and the opportunity to visit many great places.

One of the topics at the Rally, at both the Freightliner and Workhorse Seminars, was fuel economy; what gear to drive in, tire inflation and engine maintenance to name a few. I thought I would provide some further information on that subject.

Fuel Price Self Defense

The rising cost of fuel has certainly gotten everyone's attention and has become a part of our daily conversations. Oil demand is soaring, thanks to the improving world economy. The US Department of Energy estimates that the world demand will grow by 50% in the next two decades. Talking about it doesn't seem to provide much relief, so what can we do to lessen the impact from rising fuel costs.

Nancy Dunham, publisher of TravelSmart, provided a list of suggestions recently in Bottom Line magazine.

- 1. Check the gauge** –start looking for fuel when your tank is at ½ so you will have a chance to comparison shop. Gas along busy highways is usually 10 cents per gallon higher.
 - 2. Join a club**- BJ's, Sam's, Flying J, Costco, sell discounted gas to members. It usually is 10-12 cents cheaper.
 - 3. Get a gas card**- Major credit card companies offer a 1-5% discount if you use their Visa or MasterCard when buying their brand of gas. The Visa card cosponsored by AAA gives 5% back from the first dollar on all purchases at the pump, regardless of the brand (no annual fee, 800-551-0839).
 - 4. Don't let your vehicle idle.** –If you are going to be at a stand still for more than a minute, turn off the engine. Idling consumes up one gallon of gas per hour. It also wastes more gas than restarting your engine.
- 5. Map unfamiliar routes in advance**- getting lost wastes gas.
 - 6. Drive strategically.** – Use cruise control- it cuts down on fuel consumption as well as speeding tickets. Avoid roads with a long string of traffic lights. Don't slam on the brakes or accelerate rapidly this lowers gas mileage by 33% at highway speeds and by 5% around town.
 - 7. Slow down**-When you drive 70 miles per hour instead of 55mph, you lose fuel economy. Every 5mph over 60 mph is like paying 10-12 cents more per gallon.
 - 8. Buy gas early in the morning or late in the evening**-the cooler temperatures will reduce the amount of evaporation.
 - 9. Use alternative transportation**When you arrive at your destination use a bike, scooter or walk for short trips or sight seeing. Scooters (Vespas and other brands) get 40 to 60 miles per gallon. Diesel powered vehicles get 20-40% better fuel economy the gas.
 - 10. Park in a shady spot**- So you won't have to blast the air conditioning as soon as you get back in your vehicle. Air conditioning reduces fuel economy.
 - 11. Keep the windows closed**Traveling with your windows open can create air drag and reduce your mileage by up to 10%.
 - 12. When selecting a car to pull behind your motorhome choose one that gets good fuel economy**Pontiac Vibe, Dodge

Neon as well as some Toyota and Honda models get 29 plus miles per gallon.

More fuel for thought

Modifying your driving style when going from behind the wheel of a passenger automobile to piloting an RV can be a vital tool in promoting fuel efficiency. A change in driving habits along with a few other tricks of the trade listed below will assist you in more easily managing the fuel requirements of your RV.

Keep cargo and passenger loads within the listed weight ratings as recommended by the vehicle manufacturer. Remember, the heavier the load the more fuel consumed, so leave unnecessary items behind. If you are confident that the next destination provides full hook ups that include water supplies, consider reducing vehicle weight while driving by traveling with empty holding tanks. However, if there is the slightest doubt as to the specifics surrounding facilities at the next destination, err on the side of caution by traveling with well-equipped onboard water supplies, including a full hot water heater.

Ignoring the importance of proper tire pressure will insure a waste of fuel. Low tire air pressure will add a drag to the vehicle that can increase fuel requirements. Frequently monitor tire pressures, and add air pressure as needed. Improper front-end alignment can accelerate tire wear and put an additional drain on the RV fuel tank. Have all alignment issues promptly repaired.

Occasionally inspect the RV roof to insure A/C covers are properly secured. Immediately replace any missing A/C covers. Before driving, confirm that the television antenna is properly retracted. Driving with the antenna up, or with a missing A/C cover will create air drag and further fuel requirements.

Poorly maintained engine components require excess fuel supply. Follow the manufacturer recommendations for regular inspection of engine hoses and filters, and by performing routine oil changes. During engine maintenance procedures check fuel lines for signs of leaks that may be unknowingly draining the fuel supply. Following each fuel stop, confirm that the dash gauge is properly calibrated to reflect the correct reading.

There is no advantage to using higher-octane gasoline; in fact, high

octane gas can be a disadvantage in many newer design engines and engines operating with a governed speed such as a generator. You should use what your operator's manual recommends.

Solar power is another option to reduce energy costs, charge batteries for free.

Did you know?

- Airstream's Interstate and Westfalia vans average 22 miles per gallon.

- [Clarification on June Schu's News](#)

In June's article I stated that to sanitize and disinfect the wastewater or the black tank in your Airstream you could pour a gallon of bleach in the tanks. I should have added that you should pour the bleach into a full tank of water. Once or twice a year should

be sufficient depending on your use pattern.

- **Did you know...**one quarter of US bridges need repair or fail to meet current safety standards? While this is an improvement from ten years ago, more than 163,000 still are deficient. The District of Columbia has more bridges (2/3) in need of repair than any other area and the number has risen since 1992. *AAA Motor Club, Washington DC.*

- **While you're traveling-Starry Nights.**

Have you looked up lately? Here is a web site that offers a monthly guide to planets, meteors, comets and other heavenly delights while on the road. www.cfa.harvard.edu/ep/starreport.html