

Expert offers gasoline saving suggestions

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With gasoline prices soaring, a Purdue University automotive expert is suggesting several ways drivers can reduce fuel costs.

Heather Cooper, an assistant professor of mechanical engineering technology, offers these suggestions:

--Run the vehicle's air conditioner on the recirculation setting to minimize the energy required to maintain a constant temperature. Set the air conditioner at a comfortable temperature -- that will use less fuel than turning it on and off as needed.

--Pickup trucks should be driven with the tailgate up, rather than down or removed completely. And a well-sealed cover or cap can improve mileage by reducing drag across the truck bed.

--For longer highway trips, lower speeds are better. When driving above 55 or 60 mph, gasoline mileage drops significantly.

--Use cruise control to maintain a consistent speed, which uses less fuel than repeatedly accelerating and decelerating.

--Use less expensive regular gasoline with a lower octane, as opposed to more expensive premium options -- unless premium is required for the vehicle.

--Keep tires inflated to manufacturers' specifications.

--Do not allow the vehicle to idle for long periods. If you expect to be waiting in one place, turn off the engine.

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