

Saving fuel on the buses

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Bus and truck companies could cut their fuel bills by more than 7% simply by training their drivers on more efficient driving techniques and offering a financial reward to those who improve fuel economy. A study published in the International Journal of Sustainable Society, suggests that training and financial reward improves efficiency by 7.3% whereas training or reward alone leads to about 5% savings.

Salim Saadia, Shlomo Hareli and Boris A. Portnov of the University of Haifa in Israel, recruited local bus company "Egged Ltd" and tracked the driving and [fuel economy](#) of four groups of 20 bus drivers at the company. A control group was given no incentive and no training. The second group were given a week of professional training on reducing fuel consumption and a [financial reward](#) depending on their improved driving over the three-week experiment; 30% of cost for each litre of gasoline saved. The third group received only training and the fourth, no training but a financial reward.

Portnov and colleagues found that fuel efficiency among the 20 drivers in the [control group](#) was not affected to any significant degree whereas those receiving training and the 30% financial bonus managed to improve their [fuel efficiency](#) by a large margin, 7.3%. The training alone led an improvement in efficiency of 5.4% and those with the financial incentive but no training improved by a little less at 5%. For Egged Ltd, this amounts to an annual fuel saving at the price during the experiment of US\$ 1 to 1.2 million; a not insignificant amount of money for a company of this size.

"Both professional [training](#) and [financial compensation](#) appear to be equally effective in encouraging gasoline saving," the team says. "The combination of both tools yielded similar results, suggesting that these strategies reached their ceiling of possible improvement in gasoline consumption," they add. "Overall, the amount of money paid to drivers for gasoline conservation is lower than the amount saved so that the company saves money overall, thus rendering the financial compensation practice cost-effective." There is no reason to assume that adopting the same approach in other companies with fleets of vehicles would not improve efficiency across the transport industry. Indeed, at the personal level, a 5% saving, even without the financial bonus would improve the budget of any family with at least one vehicle.

More information: "Can gasoline be saved by financial incentives and training of bus drivers? 'Egged Ltd.' bus company in Israel as a case study" in *Int. J. Sustainable Society*, 2012, 5, 5-10

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