



Save Fuel by Driving Smart

by Josh Dodson, Owner of GreasePro

As of the moment this article is being put together, \$3.78 is the price per gallon for gasoline. \$4.09 for #2 diesel fuel. Give it a day and this price could be \$.25 per gallon higher or \$.10 per gallon less. Fuel expense ranks second behind labor as our biggest cost of doing business in my kitchen hood cleaning company, GreasePro LLC, and the gloomy forecast of \$4, \$5, even potentially \$6 per gallon for fuel doesn't seem like it will make a turn back anytime soon.

Being aware of "bad habits" that cause fuel mileage to go down and equipment fuel consumption to go up can save you hundreds of dollars at the fuel pump. Informing your employees of these bad habits and encouraging them to practice better habits when driving and working will ease the damage to your bottom line when your fuel bill comes in.

The following tips are from the www.fueleconomy.gov/feg/drivehabits website:

1. Drive Wisely

Aggressive driving – which includes speeding, rapid acceleration and braking – wastes gas

and can lower your gas mileage by 33 percent at highway speeds, and by five percent in town. Smart driving is also safer, which can save you a lot more than gas money.

***Fuel Economy Benefit: 5-33%**
Equivalent Savings: \$.19-\$1.23/gal.

2. Drive the Speed Limit

Although the speed for optimal fuel economy varies by vehicles, gas mileage usually decreases quickly and significantly at speeds above 60 mph. Generally, every five mph you drive over 60 mph is like paying an additional \$0.30 per gallon for gas. Again, driving the speed limit not only saves fuel, it's safer.

***Fuel Economy Benefit: 7-23%**
Equivalent Savings: \$.26-\$.86/gal.

3. Lighten Your Load

Get rid of unnecessary items in your vehicle, particularly heavy ones. An extra 100 pounds in your vehicle could reduce your MPG by up to 2 percent. (This is based on the percentage of extra weight relative to the vehicle's weight

and affects smaller vehicles more than larger ones.

***Fuel Economy Benefit:** 1-2%/100 lbs.
Equivalent Savings: \$0.04-\$0.07/gal.

4. Avoid Unnecessary Idling

Idling can use a quarter to a half gallon of fuel per hour, depending on engine size and air conditioner (AC) use. Turn off your engine when your vehicle is parked (and tell your technicians to do the same). Restarting your vehicle will use less fuel than running it in idle for any length of time. (Turning your engine on and off excessively, however, may increase starter wear.

***Fuel Cost Savings:** \$0.01-\$0.03/min (AC off)
\$0.02-\$0.04/min. (AC on)

5. Use Overdrive Gears

When you use overdrive gearing, your car's engine speed goes down. This saves gas and reduces engine wear.

Beyond Your Vehicles

Driving is not the only source of "bad habits" when it comes to over consumption of fuel for cleaning companies. Our cleaning tools run on gasoline, diesel, natural gas/propane, and kerosene, all of which have been steadily increasing in cost. The following information comes from my own research from my company's fuel and equipment use.

Burner Use

Running hot supply water reduces the burn time to heat the water to 180+ degrees. Certain pumps may not be capable of handling the extra hot water and will be equipped with a thermal relief valve that will "dump" when the temperature limit is reached. Adjusting the hot and cold mix will allow you to run the water as close to the limit without losing supply pressure due to the "dump."

***Fuel Economy Benefit:** 25-50%.
Equivalent Savings: \$1-\$2/gallon

Gasoline Powered Pressure Washers

Allowing the pressure washer to run while not using for cleaning is unnecessary and wastes fuel. Turning the unit off when coming off rooftops and transitioning between different parts of a job can save several minutes of

run time on an average job. Also running at full idle is not necessary for peak cleaning performance, and is hard on the motor. Adjust the idle so your cleaning power is effective but not wide open.

****Fuel Economy Benefit:** 12-25%.
Equivalent Savings: \$0.45-\$0.90/gallon

I encourage everyone to practice these "good habits" in their driving and work routines. Whether you save a couple of dollars or a couple thousand dollars, it's all your hard earned money. It will sit much better in your bank than being exhausted through a tailpipe or going up in diesel smoke.

Josh Dodson has been in the kitchen exhaust cleaning business since 2002. He is the owner of Grease Pro LLC, which serves parts of North Carolina, South Carolina and Virginia. To learn more, visit his website at www.carolinahoodcleaning.com.

***Note:** Cost savings are based on an assumed fuel price of \$3.72/gallon.

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