

Saving the Planet One Car at a Time

By Haley

We all know that there are many other options rather than gasoline. Bio-diesel, alternative fuels, ethanol, hybrid and electric cars – even hydrogen cars that run off of water and steam have been invented! Why, you ask? Cost, environmental reasons (pollution, global warming, greenhouse effect, and climate just to name a few), along with the fact that we're slowly running out of fossil fuels.

We've heard that these options are best for our planet's (as well as our) future. So why haven't more people started changing to such simple solutions? Let's face it: few people are willing to change their old habits unless they are forced to. Even the small amount of people who are changing hasn't drastically helped. Unless everyone starts changing their habits, new technology and new options like those previously mentioned might as well be thrown out of the window since not enough people will pursue them.

Another reason why we don't see more gas stations with alternative fuels and more hybrids on the highways is that every idea has its positive and negative consequences.

The BMW 750hL dual-fuel is a new dual hydrogen car. The good thing is that it has two separate gas tanks, and a button on the dash that you press to switch the engine from gas to hydrogen power which is easy for the owner. Its fuel is also clean to burn and renewable; there are units in the desert that convert sunlight into hydrogen. Hybrids use a combination of gas and electricity that saves gas and doesn't release as many chlorofluorocarbons. Electric cars are attractive to look at and don't use much gas, if any. Some batteries are even reusable which saves money and energy.

“In a typical year, a single American releases more than 15,000 pounds of carbon emissions into the atmosphere”

Ethanol reduces carbon monoxide and other similar pollutants. The plants being grown for ethanol absorb carbon dioxide and lessen CO₂ levels. It can also add to economy, particularly in agriculture, and helps reduce the importation of oil. Bio-diesel helps to extend the energy of the standard diesel. Bio-diesel can be used as home-heating oil. Along with ethanol, it reduces harmful emissions. It's less combustible making it safe to store and transport. It is also biodegradable and breaks down nearly four times faster than petroleum diesel.

Along with pros, there are cons. The cons are making the smarter options less appealing and sometimes keep people from focusing on the pros.

The BMW 750hL dual-fuel hydrogen car needs its own hydrogen-filling station since standard gas stations don't have hydrogen fuel. As for trying to get someone to two an electric car, it is nearly impossible since the car might have busted wires and could catch fire. With hybrid and electric cars, it takes time just to reach 70 miles per hour.

Ethanol, alternative and bio-fuels have the potential to be cheaper than gasoline but until they rise in use and popularity, they will stay their current price which is more than regular fuel.

The most important factor that seems to matter most to people is cost. Saving the world and reducing CO2 emissions is expensive. Someone with a limited budget is going to go with the best deal. Unfortunately, alternative-fuel vehicles are not the best deal. The only reason we are still using fossil fuels is because they are cheaper than the alternatives. People will buy renewables if they become cheaper than fossil fuels.

We can achieve this by:

- Removing all taxes from non-polluting energy and products
- Taxing fossil fuels heavily
- Taxing airplane fuel at the same rate
- Using the money raised from these taxes to build renewable power stations

Obviously, this isn't going to happen overnight. So until then,

Do these:

- Regular car maintenance
It helps improve fuel efficiency and reduces emissions. When just 1 percent of car owners properly maintain their cars, nearly a billion pounds of carbon dioxide are kept out of the atmosphere.
- Drive carefully and don't waste fuel
You can shrink CO2 emissions by adjusting your driving style. Choose proper gears, do not abuse the gas pedal, use the engine brake instead of the pedal brake and turn off your engine when your vehicle is in place for more than one minute. By readjusting your driving style you can save money on fuel and car maintenance.
- Keep your tires inflated
It can improve gas mileage by more than 3%. Since every gallon of gasoline saved keeps 20 pounds of carbon dioxide out of the atmosphere, every increase in fuel efficiency makes a difference!
- When buying a new car, choose a more fuel-efficient vehicle
You can save 3,000 pounds of carbon dioxide every year if your new car gets 3 miles per gallon more than your current one. You can get up to 60 miles per gallon with a hybrid!

Changes like these are easy, simple, and cheap. They help the environment, the future and even your wallet! Just because you don't have the salary of Bill Gates doesn't mean you can't reduce carbon emissions. Small differences make a dramatic impact.

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