

# Automotive Answers

## Fuel-Efficient Driving Tips

(NAPSA)—With gas prices continuing at high levels, it's important to take advantage of every possible option for improving fuel economy. There are a number of ways to boost your vehicle's gas mileage, most of which can easily be worked into your everyday driving:

- **Driving steadily**—Driving between 55 and 65 mph offers the most fuel efficiency on the highway. Using cruise control whenever possible also will help ensure maximum efficiency. Increasing highway speed from 55 to 75 mph increases gas consumption by almost 20 percent.

- **Tire pressure**—Check tire pressure at least once a month. Under-inflated tires can cause a three percent increase in fuel consumption.

- **Overdrive**—Using your transmission's overdrive gear slows engine speed, which not only saves fuel, but also reduces engine wear.

- **Accessories**—Be sure to shut off and unplug all power-consuming accessories, such as phone chargers, air conditioning, TVs and DVD players, before turning off the vehicle. Doing so decreases the engine load the next time you start your vehicle.

- **Vehicle service**—A poorly tuned engine can ruin fuel efficiency. Be sure to follow a manufacturer's vehicle maintenance and tune-up schedule. Check the air filter regularly. Make sure spark plugs are firing properly and engine timing is correct. Although results vary based on the kinds of repairs done, fuel efficiency can be improved by up to 40 percent.

"Every drop you put into your gas tank is money out of your pocket," says Paul Lasley, co-host of On Travel Radio features and



**Hybrid vehicles offer increased fuel efficiency through use of an electric motor.**

columnist for *Westways*, the magazine of the Automobile Club of Southern California. "You can take charge of the situation—some small changes in driving habits can add up to real savings in money for gas."

For those looking for a more long-term solution, hybrid gas-electric vehicles may be the best option. The best known of these vehicles is probably the Toyota Prius, which uses both an electric motor and gas engine for power. The power provided by the electric motor reduces the amount of gasoline used.

Hybrids have come a long way since the concept of electric vehicles was first introduced. They don't need to be plugged in, as the batteries powering the electric motor recharge while the car is driving.

The Prius was recently named *Motor Trend* magazine's Car of the Year for overall excellence. And as fuel consumption continues to be an issue, more and more hybrids will hit the streets, including hybrid SUVs. Lexus will soon introduce the first luxury hybrid, the RX 400h, and it will be followed by a hybrid version of the Toyota Highlander.