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## **Tips for Cutting Driving Costs this Winter**

*by Saskatchewan Office of Energy Conservation*

High fuel prices are prompting many motorists to reduce their driving costs by adopting measures to improve fuel economy. Most of these measures cost nothing and deliver significant cost savings.

Your “driving style” can make a big difference in the amount of fuel your car uses. A slower, gentler style is much safer and saves money.

On the highway, accelerate smoothly when passing cars or when merging with faster traffic and use cruise control to maintain a constant speed. Reducing your speed to 90 kilometres per hour from 100 improves fuel economy by about 10 per cent. On the other hand, increasing your cruising speed to 120 km/h from 100 will increase fuel consumption by about 20 per cent for most vehicles.

In the city, rapid acceleration and sudden stops are dangerous, especially in icy conditions. This type of driving also increases fuel consumption by as much as 40 per cent and some toxic emissions more than five times. However, studies show that an aggressive driving style decreases time spent traveling between points by just 5 per cent.

Save fuel by taking your foot off the accelerator well in advance of a red light and coasting to the intersection. Often, the red light will turn green before you get there and you won't have to stop and reaccelerate. Avoid resting your left foot on the brake pedal, which is a bad habit that increases fuel consumption.

Cold conditions often prompt us to idle our cars for long periods. Except in extreme weather, idling is merely a waste of fuel and causes unnecessary pollution. Idling your car for half of an hour can consume two litres of gas.

Excessive idling can contaminate engine oil and damage engine components. Except when you are in traffic, turn off your engine when stopping for longer than 10 seconds. More than 10 seconds of idling can use more fuel than turning off the engine and restarting it.

In cold weather, the best way to warm up a vehicle is by driving. With computer-controlled, fuel-injected engines, you need no more than 30 seconds of idling in winter. Anything more simply wastes fuel and increases emissions. However, it is a good idea to drive slowly until your car warms up, which may take about 5 kilometres.

In temperatures below 0 C, using a block heater can improve overall fuel economy by 10 per cent or more. But use an automatic timer to switch on the block heater two hours before you plan to drive the vehicle. This is all the time needed to warm the engine and lowers electricity use.

Tire inflation needs special attention during the winter. Cold weather decreases

the air pressure in tires, adding to the rolling resistance caused by snow and slush. Each tire that is under-inflated by two pounds per square inch causes a one per cent increase in fuel consumption. So check tire pressures regularly, especially after a sharp drop in temperature.

For more Fuel Efficient Driving Tips visit this federal government website  
<http://oee.nrcan.gc.ca/transportation/personal/index.cfm>

With fuel prices rising, many people are reevaluating the type of vehicle they are driving. For example, trucks and sport utility vehicles may use twice as much fuel of the more efficient sedans or station wagons. And four-wheel drive traction can increase fuel consumption from five to 10 per cent over two-wheel drive traction.

When purchasing a new vehicle, a good rule of thumb is to aim for a 20 per cent fuel economy improvement over your current model. Compare fuel consumption using the vehicle Fuel Consumption Guide available on the web at  
<http://oee.nrcan.gc.ca/transportation/tools/fuel-consumption-guide/> or by calling 1 800 387-2000 to order a copy.

Also, consider options like public transit or walking to work. It may be more practical than you think, and save a lot of money and energy.

The Office of Energy Conservation is a resource for information on cost-effective energy conservation initiatives and practices for Saskatchewan. More information about OEC along with other energy efficient articles can be found at [www.oec.ca](http://www.oec.ca).