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Economy Tips for Fuel Efficient Driving

March 3, 2008, Geneva - Improving the fuel efficiency of vehicles is a key topic in the minds of consumers and manufacturers. While auto companies make progress in technology, there are quite a number of tips that any driver can employ to achieve world-class fuel economy.

A Jeep® Compass and Jeep Patriot were recently driven on a fuel economy challenge by economy driving

enthusiasts John and Helen Taylor. Both vehicles were standard, series production models. The vehicles travelled on normal roads, at realistic speeds and in a variety of weather and traffic conditions.

"We used simple fuel economy driving techniques that any driver could replicate," said John Taylor. "There is no hidden secret to what we achieved on this drive, and by following the same simple actions, I am confident that any motorist can achieve outstanding fuel efficiency gains."

By far the most important factor in the reduction of fuel consumption is the driver. The rule is simple: slow down and take it easy.

"The Jeep Patriot and Compass clearly challenge the myth that all SUVs are gas guzzlers," said Helen Taylor. "By following simple fuel-saving tips, we've proven, in everyday driving conditions just how fuel efficient these two Jeep SUVs can be."

The Taylors offer the following tips and guidance on how motorists can obtain the best possible fuel efficiency from their vehicle.

Drive Smoothly

Aggressive driving can use as much as a third more fuel compared to conservative driving. Avoid accelerating or braking too hard, and try to keep the steering action as smooth as possible.

Use Higher Gears

The higher the gear, the lower the engine speed. This can improve fuel efficiency, so use the highest gear appropriate, without causing the engine to labour at an ultra-low rpm. Automatic transmission vehicles will upshift through the gears more quickly and smoothly if the driver eases back slightly on the accelerator when the car has gathered sufficient momentum.

Tune and Service the Engine

A well tuned engine can improve fuel economy by up to four percent. Change the oil and always follow the car manufacturer's recommendation on servicing.

Keep the Tyres at the Correct Pressure

Correctly inflated tyres are safer and last longer, and they also reduce the amount of energy required to keep the vehicle rolling. A tyre that is under inflated by just 69 millibar (one psi) can reduce fuel efficiency by as much as three percent.

Avoid Carrying Excess Weight

For every extra 45 kilograms (100 pounds) carried in a vehicle, the fuel efficiency can drop by two percent, so keep the trunk and rear seat clear of any unnecessary items that just add weight to the vehicle.

Take the Roof Rack Off

If the roof rack or roof bars are not being used, then remove them. They adversely affect the aerodynamic efficiency of the vehicle and create drag, reducing fuel economy by as much as five percent.

Use the Correct Engine Oil

Always use the recommended grade of motor oil. Using the manufacturer's recommended lubricant can improve fuel efficiency by one or two percent. Higher quality motor oils can also help your engine operate more efficiently.

Avoid Excess Idling

Idling gets a vehicle nowhere but still burns fuel. Turn the engine off when you're in a queue, or waiting for someone, until you need to drive.

Avoid High Speeds

The faster you travel, the more wind resistance you'll encounter and the more fuel your vehicle will consume just to maintain speed. Driving just eight km/h (five mph) over the speed limit can affect fuel economy by up to 23 percent.

Maintain the Distance

Leaving a sensible distance between your car and the vehicle in front gives the driver ample time to anticipate obstacles and to brake evenly.

Use Air Conditioning Sparingly

Air conditioning puts added strain on the engine and uses additional fuel when operating, so limit its use to particularly hot days. On temperate days, use the fan instead of air conditioning.

Check the Air Filter

The air filter keeps impurities from damaging your engine. Replacing a clogged air filter can improve fuel economy by as much as 10 percent while helping to protect your engine.

Avoid Rush Hour or Traffic Jam Hotspots

If you can travel outside of peak times and avoid known areas of heavy traffic, you'll spend less time stuck in queues and slow-moving traffic, thus consuming less fuel.

Conserve Momentum

Think ahead when driving. For example, slow down early to let red traffic lights change to green, rather than stopping completely. Also, speed up a little before reaching the start of a hill and then allow the vehicle's momentum to carry the vehicle up the hill without working the engine harder.

Keep Calm

When drivers are not calm, they are more likely to make judgement errors. Fuel efficiency is all about smoothness. Judgement and keeping calm is absolutely crucial to achieving fuel economy.

Use Handbrakes on Slopes

Some motorists do not use the handbrake when stopping their vehicle on a slope. Instead, they either partially disengage the clutch (on manual transmission vehicles), or use the accelerator (on automatic vehicles), to keep the vehicles from rolling back. Both actions use fuel unnecessarily.

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