



147 Million Gallons of Wasted Gas? --It's a Drop in the Bucket.

Loose gas caps, under-inflated tires, faulty thermostats, worn spark plugs, malfunctioning engine controls, poor wheel alignment and the list goes on. These are among the conditions that daily cost consumers millions of dollars in wasted fuel.

"Something as innocuous as an improperly tightened gas cap, for example, or one that's missing or defective, might seem a minor factor," said Rich White of the Car Care Council. "But consider that 17 percent of the vehicles on U.S. highways have either misused or missing gas caps, causing 147,000,000 gallons of gas per year to vaporize into the atmosphere (source: Service Tech Magazine, September 2000).

"To the maxim 'waste not, want not,' we need to add 'be car care aware,' because most drivers are unaware of the economic consequences of neglected maintenance."

White said the nearly 150 million gallons of gas out of the filler cap are literally a drop in the bucket of waste.

"Among the six worst offenders are under-inflated tires and incorrect wheel alignment, conditions which increase rolling resistance. Like driving with the parking brake not fully released, it can cost a mile or two per gallon on a car that normally delivers 20 miles per gallon. "Among other gas guzzlers," said White, "are dirty oil, a mile per gallon; a slipping automatic transmission, another mile per gallon and as much as two mpg for a cooling system thermostat that causes the engine to run too cold.

"Finally, there could be a malfunction of one or more components in the fuel, ignition or emission control systems, especially critical in cold weather driving. The fuel penalty for just one misfiring spark plug is two or three miles per gallon.

"Combining all of these discrepancies into one vehicle, the cost of wasted fuel easily could exceed recent increases in pump prices," said White. "It's what being car care aware is all about."