

Drive Down Costs,

by Bill Parker Symmetry Mentor

What's driving climate change? Cars are definitely contributing. Motor vehicles emit greenhouse gases. In vehicles, the principle greenhouse gas is carbon dioxide (CO₂) but vehicles also produce nitrous oxide and methane, which contribute to climate change. However, not all vehicles will have the same impact on climate change.

The vehicle's level of CO₂ emissions is linked to two factors; the amount of fuel consumed and the type of fuel used. In Australia in 2004, cars contributed 41.7 million tonnes of carbon dioxide or equivalent greenhouse gases, which is 7.4% of total national emissions. Trucks and light commercial vehicles contributed 26.2 million tonnes. Together these represent 12% of Australia's total emissions and since 1990 this figure has increased by 25%.

Many Australians have a love hate relationship with motor vehicles. We love our cars but hate the cost of insurance. We love driving our cars and hate paying for fuel. We love the look of the car but hate looking at the bills, and so on.

The type of vehicle used, driving habits, and the driving conditions will all affect your vehicle's environmental performance and the costs to your business. Whether your vehicle is performance red, classic silver, fleet car white, Bentley blue, or bold and black, consider making your vehicle green. Here's how....

TEN THINGS YOU CAN DO TO MAKE YOUR COMPANY VEHICLE GREEN.

1. Use it and you'll lose it

You all know the business adage that of the six pees. (P*ss Poor Planning Prevents Poor Performance) The same applies to planning travel and logistics. Try these tips:

- Train your staff in time management.
- Install travel efficiency KPI's in your business.
- Use technology such as software and GPS units to make travel more efficient.
- Think about your travel needs prior to your travel. Make appointments with travel in mind. Be progressive not reactive. Planned travel decisions will save you money.
- Plan to do a number of errands in one trip rather than several trips and save both time and fuel.
- Avoid peak-hour traffic whenever possible.
- Encourage your staff to use alternative transport, reward them for their efforts and let your customers know you care about the environment.

2. Get into top gear

Not the TV show. Here's some interesting *motofacts*:

- The engine runs most efficiently between around 1,500 and 2,500 rpm (lower in diesels). To maintain these low revs you should change up through the gears as soon as practical and before the revs reach 2,500 rpm.
- Automatic transmissions will shift up more quickly and smoothly if you ease back slightly on the accelerator once the car gathers momentum.

3. Take a cruise.

Drive smoothly. Unnecessary acceleration burns fuel and money. Erratic driving does not save time. It can build up stress. Sounds like a lose/ lose situation.

- If you drive at a good distance from the car in front, you can anticipate and travel with the flow of traffic. You will be able to see such things as traffic lights changing or cars turning and minimise your fuel use. Over accelerating then braking and accelerating back up to full speed burns your fuel and your budget.

4. Speed kills (your fuel budget)

Going fast and getting nowhere? Too many speeding fines? How's your fuel expenditure?

- High speeds result in high fuel consumption.
- At 110 km/h your car uses up to 25% more fuel than it would cruising at 90 km/h.

5. Burning rubber is burning money

Looking after your tyres will not only reduce your fuel consumption it will also extend tyre life, improve handling, and help reduce costs.

- Inflate your vehicle's tyres to the highest pressure recommended by the tyre manufacturer
- make sure your wheels are properly aligned (remember to keep your spare tire inflated as well).

6. Chill your bill - use air conditioning sparingly

Air apparent! Did you know:

- Air conditioners can use about 10% extra fuel when operating, but.....
- At speeds of over 80 km/h, use of air conditioning is better for fuel consumption than an open window.

7. Lighten ya load bro'

Have you been lugging stuff around for no reason? Could mean you are carry a higher than needed fuel bill. Travel light and lighten your costs:

- Don't carry more people or cargo than you have to.
- The more a vehicle carries the more fuel it uses; an extra 50kg of weight can increase your fuel bill by around 2%.

8. Service is the key

Two words... ..Maintenance schedule. Keeping your vehicle well tuned will minimise its environmental impact and make it cheaper to run any vehicle.

- It's a deductible expense.
- Lock it in your budget and your diary.

9. Increase liquidity

Go LPG. Autogas is readily available in Australia. LPG vehicles have half the carbon footprint and emit 15% less CO2 compared to their petrol powered equivalents.

- Using Autogas can save you up to 50% on your vehicle fuel bills.
- An Autogas vehicle conversion usually pays for itself in savings within two years
- <http://www.lpgaaustralia.com.au/>

10. Spend some green

Next time you buy or lease, purchase a vehicle using the Green Car guide

- These can be cheaper to run.
- Insurance rebates available.

In business, motor vehicles are essential tools of trade. They get us, our goods and services, and our staff to where they need to be, so we can do what we do. The use of vehicles in our business is being impacted by ever rising costs of insurance and fuel. Recently, we have seen a short term fall in fuel pricing, however, the head of Caltex Australia said, on national television in April this year, that the expected retail price point of unleaded petrol will be \$3.35 per litre by 2010. That's \$200 for a sixty litre tank. Now is a good time to start to manage fuel costs and help reduce emissions.