

## **Conserve Fuel and Save Money**

We have all seen the headlines, "Fuel Prices Jump," and felt the pinch. Rather than sit idly by and watch pump prices go up, tow providers can minimize the effect by employing some fuel-conservation practices. Although truck manufacturers have increased overall energy and fuel efficiency, such gains have been offset by the popularity of larger and less efficient vehicles, such as medium duty wheel lifts and flatbeds. Average fuel efficiency has remained fairly constant during the past 10 years.

### **Here are some tips to help save fuel and money:**

- Review your service call volume and consider deploying a light service vehicle such as a van or pick up truck. More than 45 percent of AAA service calls only require a light service performed including lock out, fuel delivery, battery service and tire service.
- Whenever possible use the most fuel efficient vehicle or piece of equipment for the required trip or job.
- Participate in a fleet fuel management program like AAA's Voyager fleet fuel card program which allows you to monitor card use and helps monitor miles per gallon of each vehicle.
- Take advantage of local, regional and national fuel discount opportunities such as AAA's Shell/ Texaco program whenever possible.
- Don't use a higher grade gasoline than recommended by your vehicle manual.
- Brake early and slowly decelerate to maximize fuel economy.
- Avoid sudden stops and starts as much as possible.
- Accelerate slowly. Imagine an egg between your foot and the accelerator pedal.
- Driving faster than posted speed limits is dangerous and increases stress. Allow time to reach your destination by driving at a proper speed. The faster a vehicle travels the more fuel it burns.
- Anticipate traffic conditions, signals and slowdowns. Driving at a consistent speed will provide improved fuel economy.
- Cruise control may be a fuel-saving option on open roads.
- Use air conditioning sparingly in stop-and-go traffic. At steady freeway speeds, however, it may be better to use the air conditioner than to drive with your windows down, which increases wind resistance.
- Routinely maintain your vehicles. Keeping tires inflated, moving components properly lubricated, and ignition and emission systems operating properly will help maximize fuel economy and extend the life of your vehicle.
- Under-inflated tires are a safety hazard and can cut fuel economy as much as two percent for each pound of pressure below the recommended level.
- Lighten the load. Don't haul extra weight in the cargo areas. A heavier vehicle requires more fuel.
- Avoid extended idling and warm-up periods. Idling consumes up to one gallon of fuel per hour.
- If purchasing or leasing a new vehicle, consider options that may affect fuel usage, such as vehicle size, engine size, cruise control and color. A light exterior color, light interior cloth seats and tinted windows can reduce heat buildup and reduce the need for air conditioning. Four-wheel-drive vehicles may use more gasoline than other vehicles, especially if the four-wheel drive mechanism is engaged during routine driving.
- A vehicle with an automatic transmission may use more gasoline than one with a manual transmission.

In summary, paying attention to the basics will pay off with savings opportunities in the long run, and may even help your insurance rates at the same time by reducing claims. If you practice these efforts now, you will be rewarded that much more should fuel prices begin to drop again.