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Drivers of SUVs Saving Big Money with Diesel Engines

By ARA Content

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by: **ARA Content**

(ARA) − Half of all American vacationers on the road this year are driving gas guzzling SUVs and pickup trucks, according to a new survey on driving habits from research firm MarketFacts. These bigger vehicles burn high amounts of fuel, which not only puts a dent in drivers' wallets, but also increases the country's dependence on foreign oil. Ironically, the MarketFacts study shows that fuel economy is an important issue for SUV and pickup drivers.

According to automotive experts, standard gasoline engines can't efficiently handle the weight of the larger −− and very popular −− SUVs and pickup trucks. There is an alternative, however, for drivers of big vehicles to consider: diesel engines.

Diesel engines like the Power Stroke Diesel in Ford F−Series Super Duty pickups are specifically made to provide better mileage −− 30 percent in most cases −− and have more pulling power than gas engines, which is why they are especially popular among those hauling camping gear or towing boats, RVs and horse trailers.

"People love big trucks for a lot of great reasons, but running a gas engine in them is like trying to heat a hotel with a small home furnace. You're going to burn way too much fuel and you still won't get the power you really need," said Patrick Charbonneau, chief technical officer, Engine Group, International Truck and Engine Corporation. "Diesel engines produce more power than gasoline engines because diesel fuel itself has more energy. And today's diesel engines are electronically controlled to boost performance and fuel efficiency."

However, the study found that despite diesel's known benefits, many Americans are resistant because they still have a negative perception of these engines, recalling the noisy and odorous diesel engines of the '70s. Industry experts dispel these myths saying today's diesel engines are greatly improved −− running quietly and not producing odors or smoke.

Major automakers in the United States have taken an interest in diesel power predominantly because of the success of diesels in Europe. "Over 30 percent of the passenger cars in Europe are now diesel, and the main reason is fuel economy," said Charbonneau. "The Big Three know fuel economy is keenly important here in North America."

Currently in the United States, diesel engines are an option over the standard gasoline engines, adding a few thousand dollars to the cost of a new vehicle. Although buying a diesel engine is a higher monetary investment initially, automakers say diesel engines make up this cost difference within just three years from fuel savings alone. Diesel engines also add greater resale value to pickups and SUVs due to their longevity.

Industry insiders believe that in 20 years, 30 percent of the passenger cars, sport utilities and pickups in America will use diesel engines because of fuel efficiency and near zero emissions capabilities. According to the Department of Energy, if diesels reach even a percent of their potential penetration by

2020, the country could conserve as much as 700,000 barrels of fuel per day −− half the energy used daily by the state of California.

For more information, visit

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Courtesy of ARA Content,

; e−mail:

SUV Pros And Cons

By Jonathon Hardcastle

Your car is bursting at the seams with children, sports equipment, groceries and pets. You think it may be time to trade up to a larger car. But is an SUV the right choice to make for your family?

First and foremost, as anyone who watches the evening news knows, the price of gas has skyrocketed and SUVs are notorious for poor gas mileage. Or are they? Depending on what make and model of SUV you choose, some get as good or better gas mileage than some large cars. For example, the 2004 Honda Element gets 22 miles to the gallon in the city, just 2 miles per gallon less than the 2004 Honda Accord. At highway speeds, the Element gets 8 miles per gallon less than the Accord, a larger, but not huge, difference Also, more and more auto manufacturers are designing hybrid gas−electric SUVs that provide better gas mileage along with the traditional extra space and power of SUVs.

Another major consideration when choosing between a car and an SUV is safety. Most people assume that, because of their larger size, that SUVs are safer than cars. However, crash tests conducted in 2003 proved that large SUVs were only slightly safer than mid−sized cars and were actually slightly

more dangerous than large cars. SUVs also can roll over when taking turns at high speed, something that cars are far less likely to do. Drivers who are switching to SUVs after many years of driving cars may need some practice to learn to drive their SUV safely.

Many people think that SUVs, due to their larger size are more comfortable and have more cargo capacity than cars. To a certain extent this is true, but it depends heavily on what make and model of SUV you choose. Some SUVs actually have limited cargo space, though almost all have the power to haul a trailer. As far as comfort, many drivers prefer being higher up from the road, but older drivers and those with disabilities may have a hard time getting into the raised seats. Additionally, buckling a child into a car seat installed in the recommended back seat center position may be difficult for shorter moms and dads.

Finally, if you do a lot of city driving and, more importantly, parking, SUVs are less maneuverable and harder to parallel park than traditional cars. Even in the suburbs where most people park in lots, the spaces may not be wide enough for certain SUVs.

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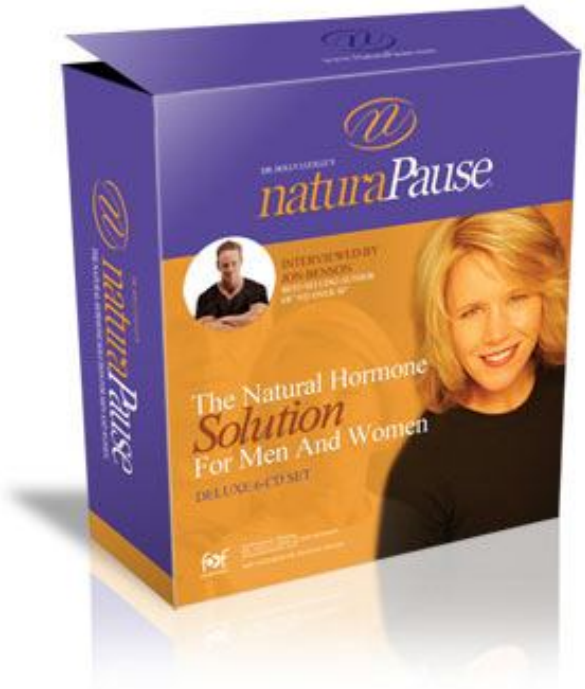

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