Nebraska Energy Quarterly

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Chamberlin retires from DWEE Weatherization Program

After working in government energy programs for 36 years, DWEE Building Program Specialist Lynn Chamberlin has retired... **Continue...**

DESL program provides low-interest loans for energy efficiency projects

The Nebraska Department of Water, Energy, and Environment's Dollar and Energy Saving Loans (DESL) program works with the state's lending institutions to provide low-interest loans to Nebraskans who want to make energy efficiency improvements... **Continue...**

Stay safe during winter power outages

During a power outage, you may face a number of hazards that can affect your health and safety. Those hazards may be more prevalent during extreme winter temperatures... **Continue...**

Energy Statistics

Nebraska by Numbers Energy consumption 50 years in review

This edition's Nebraska by Numbers will focus on Nebraska's changing energy landscape and will review energy consumption by fuel type between 1973 and 2023...**Continue...**

Energy Tips

Drive more efficiently for gas savings

Sensible driving is safer for everyone, so more may be saved than gas money. Here are some tips to help improve your fuel economy this holiday travel season and year-round....**Continue...**

Chamberlin retires from DWEE Weatherization Program

After working in government energy programs for 36 years, DWEE Building Program Specialist Lynn Chamberlin has retired.

Since 2010, Chamberlin has worked in Nebraska's Weatherization Assistance Program (NeWAP), which weatherizes the homes of low-income Nebraskans at no cost to reduce their energy bills by making their homes more energy efficient.

Chamberlin said when she began in the Weatherization program, Nebraska had a number of excellent weatherization agencies, but they mostly worked independently of each other.

Katie Svoboda, DWEE's Weatherization, Waste, and Air Grants Section supervisor, said Chamberlin helped build camaraderie among the state's weatherization providers.

"She helped improve communication and collaboration across agencies and played a big part in building a strong statewide Weatherization network," Svoboda said.

The state's Weatherization team and the regional Weatherization providers now hold quarterly working group meetings to discuss program updates, get feedback on policy updates, network, and problem solve.

Lynn Chamberlin at her retirement party in December 2025. Chamberlin began her career with the Nebraska Energy Office, which later became DWEE, in 1989. Having worked in Nebraska's Weatherization Assistance Program since 2010, Chamberlin is credited for helping build connections among the state's Weatherization providers and strengthening the program for its low-income clients.

"I am pleased to have helped the NeWAP develop into a network that communicates, trains, and shares information between agencies," Chamberlin said. "It has truly become a state-wide weatherization network."

Chamberlin began her career at the Nebraska Energy Office (now DWEE) in 1989 as a program administrator for the 0% Public School Loan Program, which provided 0% loans to public school districts to complete energy efficiency work in their buildings. She then worked for the state's Green Lights Program and later the Federal Emergency Management Program, where she worked with college interns to complete energy audits in state and federal buildings, respectively, to determine what savings could be achieved through lighting or other energy efficiency upgrades.

Later, Chamberlin moved on to train builders and code officials on the requirements of the latest state energy code. She also worked with builders to develop the Nebraska Certified Green Building Program, which resulted in program homes being built 30% more energy efficient than the adopted building code.

Back to page 1

The U.S. Department of Energy updated the Weatherization Assistance Program's technical requirements in 2010 to include an energy audit, savings-to-investment calculations, mandatory blower door testing, and certifications from energy auditors and quality control inspectors. Around that time, the Green Building Program had sunset.

"It just seemed like a natural move to bring my technical background to Weatherization," Chamberlin said.

Svoboda first met Chamberlin in 2012, and said Chamberlin quickly became her mentor and was quick to share her knowledge and experience.

"I've learned so much from her over the years," Svoboda said, "about the Weatherization Program, the technical side of the work, how to collaborate with the Weatherization subgrantee network, and how to always look for ways to improve the program for clients."

Svoboda said Chamberlin also led by example with her get-it-done mindset and her unwavering commitment to the Weatherization program and the Nebraskans it serves. These two characteristics helped the state improve its Weatherization program.

Chamberlin worked closely with the Nebraska Department of Health and Human Services Low-Income Home Energy Assistance Program (LIHEAP) to get a lower Energy Audit Savings-to-Investment Ratio approved, which allowed more energy efficiency measures to be installed in low-income clients' homes.

"Lynn made a lasting impact by strengthening the program with her technical knowledge and experience," Svoboda said.

Svoboda said she will miss Lynn's guidance, knowledge, commitment, strong work ethic, willingness to help, and most of all, her friendship.

"Lynn's retirement marks the end of an era for the Weatherization Program," Svoboda said. "Her legacy of mentorship, dedication, and excellence will continue to inspire all of us who had the privilege of working with her. I'm deeply grateful for her guidance and friendship, and I know her impact on the program will be felt for years to come."

In her retirement, Chamberlin plans to relax and travel.

DESL program provides low-interest loans for energy efficiency projects

The Nebraska Department of Water, Energy, and Environment's Dollar and Energy Saving Loans (DESL) program works with the state's lending institutions to provide low-interest loans to Nebraskans who want to make energy efficiency improvements in their homes or buildings.

Between March 1990 and June 30, 2024, DWEE's DESL program helped finance more than 31,177 energy saving projects across Nebraska's 93 counties. These projects total more than $401 million, with DWEE providing more than $204 million from its revolving loan fund. The state's participating lenders have provided more than $143.8 million in funds, and the balance of roughly $54 million was spent by borrowers.

DWEE Energy Planning and Resources Supervisor Aaron Miller said the fact that the DESL program is used across the state is significant.

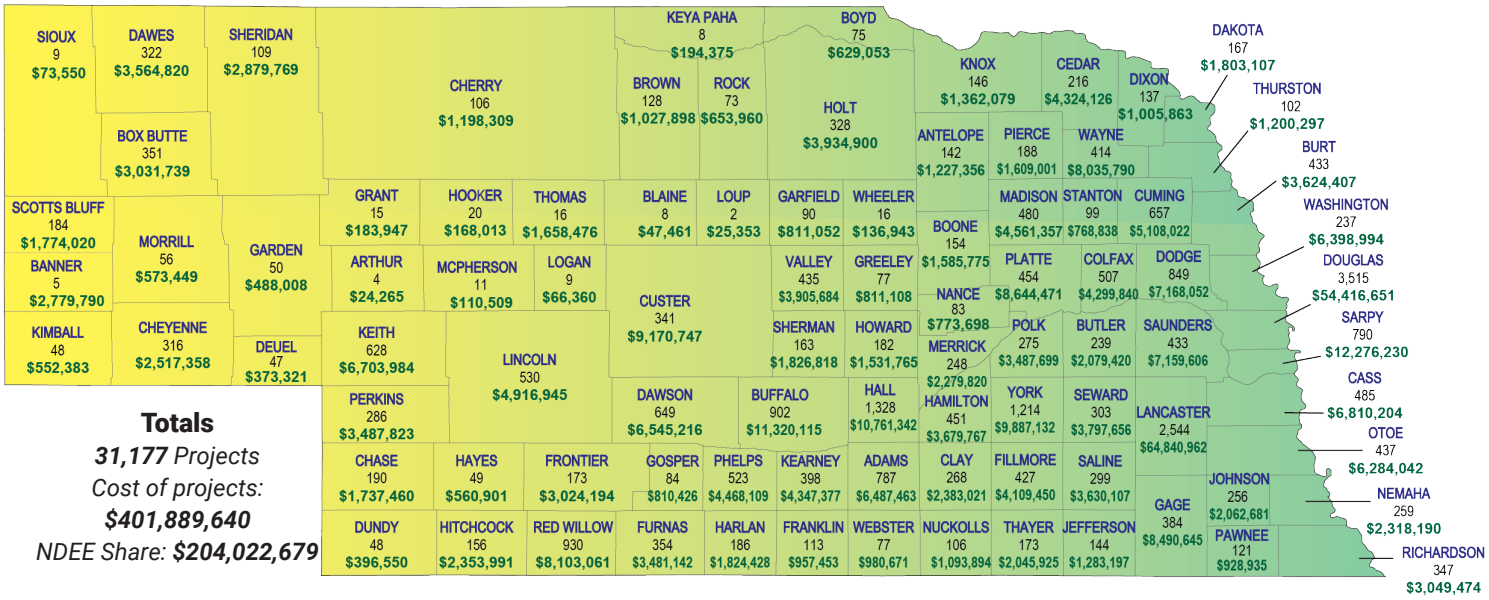
"It's rewarding to know the DESL program has had a part in projects state wide," Miller said. "Not only does this program provide low-interest loans to Nebraskans, the energy efficiency measures can lead to savings on energy bills."

The DESL program was created using oil overcharge funds. During a period of federal price controls from 1973 to 1981, oil companies overcharged their customers. Courts ordered the companies to pay indirect restitution by providing funds to states, and the states used those funds to create energy assistance and efficiency programs.

Nebraska used those funds to create the DESL program, which is a revolving loan fund; money from borrowers' loan repayments is put back into the program, according Miller. He said a few other states used their funds as grants.

"The state is unique in how it continues to use the original oil overcharge funds," Miller said. "All the funding we put in comes back to DWEE, and it can continuously recycle that money and fund projects throughout the state.

Number of DESL Projects by County and Dollar Amount of Projects as of June 30, 2024



Back to page 1

The DESL program was later augmented with funds from the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act of 2009. In addition, the Nebraska Public Power District provided $500,000 to the DESL program twice — once in March 2009 and again in January 2010. Those funds were used to finance 1.5% loans for specific types of projects. In December 2023, the Omaha Public Power District also provided $500,000 to the program to provide a 3% financing option covering a variety of energy saving measures.

Nebraska residents, businesses, non-profits, local governments, and school districts are among those that can apply for a DESL loan. Those interested in receiving a loan can start the process by applying though their lending institutions.

Miller said once the lender has granted preliminary approval, it sends the application to DWEE to review the proposed project. If the project qualifies and meets energy requirements, DWEE lets the lender know the project can proceed. The applicant and the lender work to complete the loan process.

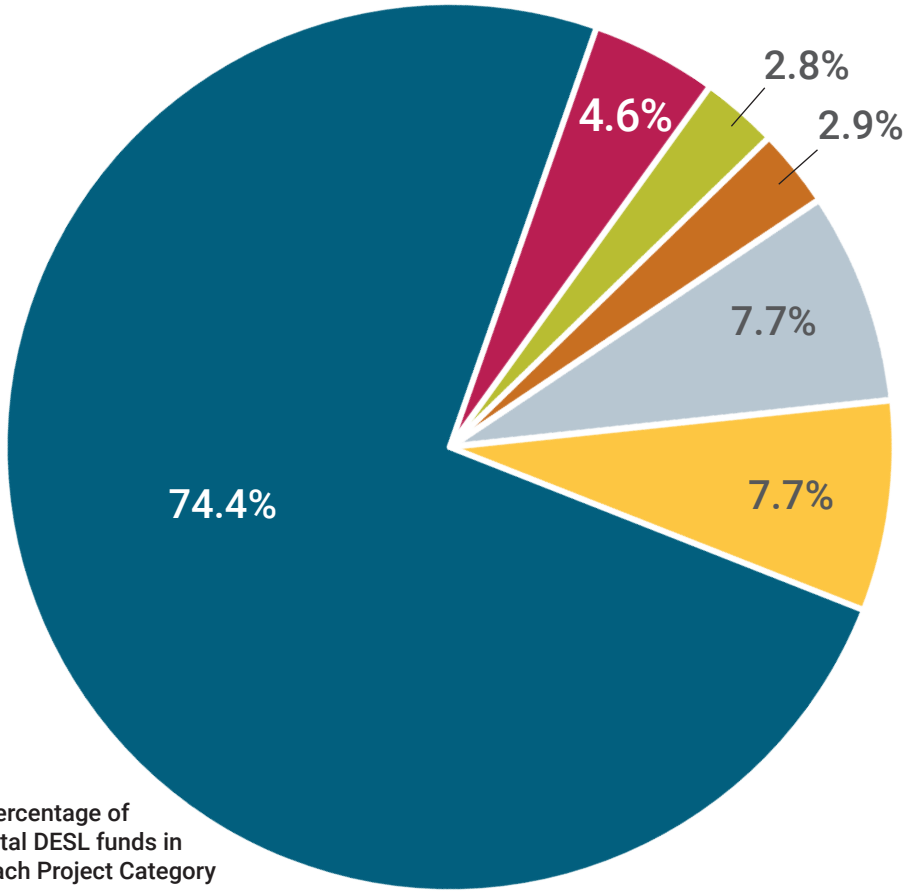
The lender and DWEE sign a participation agreement, and DWEE provides a percentage of the loan, which allows the bank to provide a lower interest rate to the applicant.

A few typical improvements that can be financed through this program include:

- Adding insulation to walls, floors, ceilings, attics, and other building envelope surfaces
- Replacing inefficient furnaces, air conditioners and heat pumps
- Replacing doors and windows
- Upgrading lighting
- Adding photovoltaic systems
- Replacing irrigation pumps and motors
- Replacing grain dryers

For more information, visit DWEE's DESL page.

Total Dollars Invested by Project Category as of June 30, 2024



Percentage of total DESL funds in each Project Category

Residential
Total costs of projects: $298,958,997
NDEE Share: $143,312,948
29,013 Projects

Local Government
Total costs of projects: $30,768,381
NDEE Share: $21,010,369
161 Projects

Business/Non-Profit
Total costs of projects: $31,013,247
NDEE Share: $14,837,070
1,155 Projects

Alternative Fuel/ Telecommunications
Total costs of projects: $11,473,505
NDEE Share: $7,147,364
44 Projects

Agricultural
Total costs of projects: $11,258,281
NDEE Share: $5,508,496
581 Projects

Wind, Solar and Fuel Cells
Total costs of projects: $18,417,229
NDEE Share: $12,206,432
223 Projects

Back to page 1

Stay safe during winter power outages

Information from the U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention

During a power outage, you may face a number of hazards that can affect your health and safety. Those hazards may be more prevalent during extreme winter temperatures. Here are some tips from the U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention to help you prepare for and cope with sudden loss of power.

Prevent carbon monoxide poisoning

Carbon monoxide (CO) is an odorless, colorless gas that can cause sudden illness and death if inhaled. When power outages occur during emergencies such as winter storms, the use of alternative sources of fuel or electricity for heating, cooling, or cooking can cause CO to build up in a home, garage, or camper and to poison the people and animals inside.

Never use a generator or other gasoline-powered engines inside your home. CO is found in combustion fumes, such as those produced by small gasoline engines, stoves, generators, lanterns, and gas ranges, or by burning charcoal and wood. CO from these sources can build up in enclosed or partially enclosed spaces. People and animals in these spaces can be poisoned and can die from breathing CO.

- Never use a generator, pressure washer, or any gasoline-powered engine inside your home, basement, or garage.
- Never place an outdoor generator, pressure washer, or any gasoline-powered engine less than 20 feet from any window, door, or vent.
- Use an extension cord that is more than 20 feet long to keep the generator at a safe distance.
- Use a battery-powered or battery backup CO detector in your home.
- Never run a generator, pressure washer, or any gasoline-powered engine inside a basement, garage, or other enclosed structure, even if the doors or windows are open, unless the equipment is professionally installed and vented. Keep vents and flues free of debris, especially if winds are high. Flying debris can block ventilation lines.
- Never use a charcoal grill, hibachi, lantern, or portable camping stove inside a home, tent, or camper.
- Never leave the motor running in a vehicle parked in an enclosed or partially enclosed space, such as a garage.

Know what to do: Carbon monoxide poisoning

Know the signs and symptoms

Exposure to CO can cause loss of consciousness and death. The most common symptoms of CO poisoning are headache, dizziness, weakness, nausea, vomiting, chest pain, and confusion. People who are sleeping or who have been drinking alcohol can die from CO poisoning before ever having symptoms.

What to do

If someone shows signs of having carbon monoxide poisoning, call 911 or your local Poison Control Center at 1-800-222-1222 or consult a health care professional right away.

For more information, visit Carbon Monoxide Poisoning.

If you plan to use a wood stove, fireplace, or space heater, be extremely careful. Follow the manufacturer's instructions. If conditions are too cold, seek shelter with friends or at a community shelter.

Have at least one of the following heat sources to keep you warm during a power outage:

- Extra blankets, sleeping bags, and warm winter coats
- Fireplace that is up to code with plenty of dry firewood or a gas log fireplace
- Portable space heaters or kerosene heaters. Check with your local fire department to make sure that

Back to page 1

kerosene heaters are legal in your area.

Protect yourself from extreme cold

Hypothermia (abnormally low body temperature) is a dangerous condition that can happen when a person is exposed to extremely cold temperatures.

Know the signs and symptoms of hypothermia and what to do if someone shows signs of hypothermia. Hypothermia is a medical emergency. If you notice any signs, take the person's temperature. If it is below 95° F, get medical attention immediately! If you are not able to get help right away, try to warm the person up and take additional steps to help the person while you wait for help. For more information, visit Preventing Hypothermia.

Protect yourself from other hazards

Use flashlights instead of candles.

- Use battery-powered flashlights and lanterns, rather than candles, gas lanterns, or torches to minimize the risk of fire.
- If you have to use candles, keep them away from anything that can catch fire. Always stay near lit candles.
- Keep a fire extinguisher handy, and make sure your family knows how to use it. Read the National Fire Protection Association's tips for using fire extinguishers.

For additional safety tips, visit Safety Guidelines: During & After a Winter Storm.

Take steps to protect yourself and others from electrical hazards you might encounter during a power outage, both inside and outside your home.

- Never touch a fallen power line.
- Do not drive through standing water if downed power lines are in the water.
- If you believe someone has had electric shock, call or have someone else call 911 or emergency medical help.

For more information and safety tips, visit What to Do to Protect Yourself From Electrical Hazards.

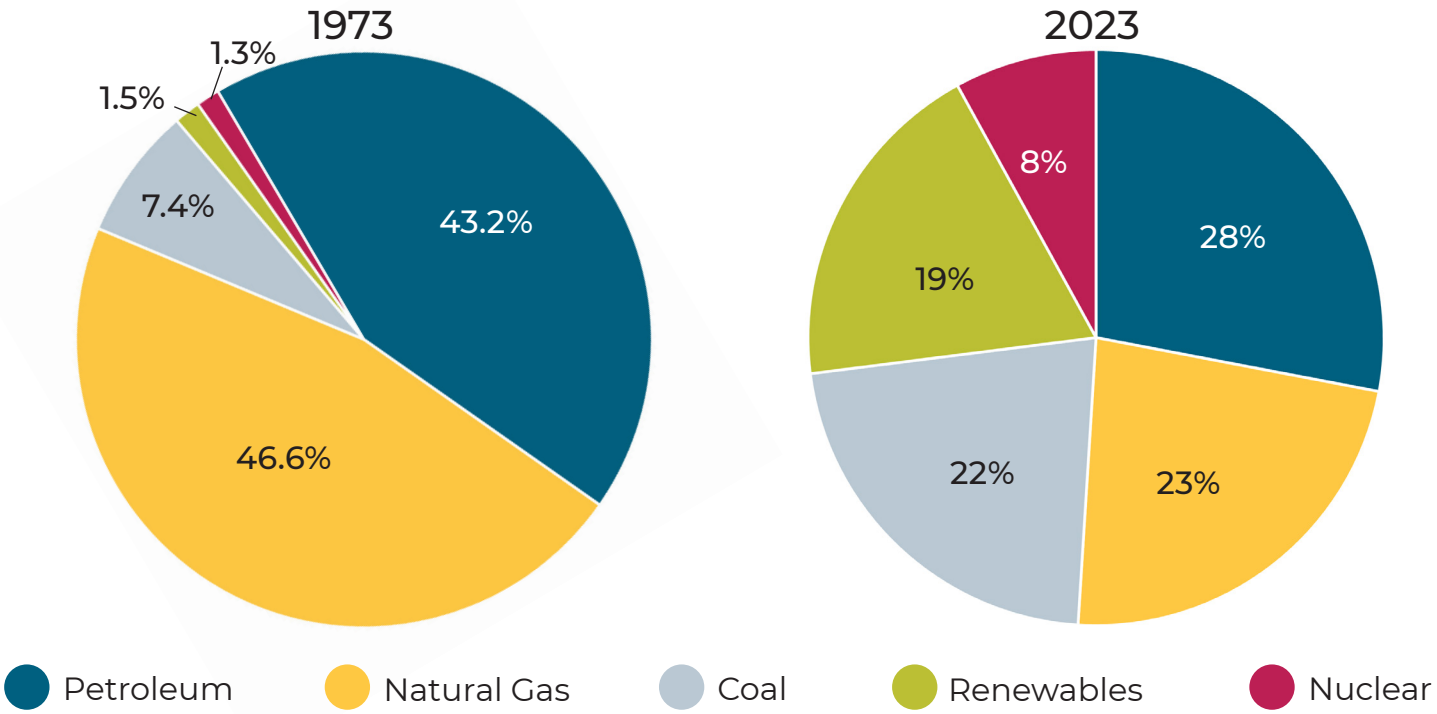
Back to page 1

Nebraska by Numbers

Energy consumption - 50 years in review

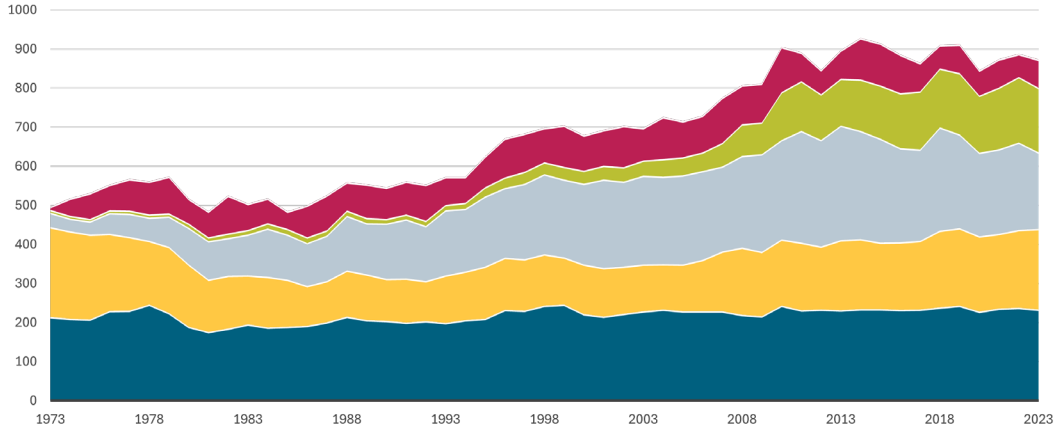
One of DWEE's duties is to maintain a collection of energy data to assess trends in the availability, consumption, and development of all forms of energy. This information can be found on DWEE's statistics page. This edition's Nebraska by Numbers will focus on Nebraska's changing energy landscape and will review energy consumption by fuel type between 1973 and 2023 (the most recent data available).

Total Energy Consumption by Fuel Type in Nebraska



Total Energy Consumption by Fuel Type in Nebraska, 1973-2023

(trillion BTU)



These charts show the primary energy resources in Nebraska, which includes the energy used in the generation of electricity, whether the electricity is used in Nebraska or not.

"Petroleum" is a broad category that includes multiple petroleum products.

Renewable energy includes biofuels, wind, wood and waste, conventional hydroelectric, geothermal, and photovoltaic and solar thermal energy.

See the Consumption by Fuel Type webpage for more details.

Back to page 1

Drive more efficiently for gas savings

Information from the U.S. Department of Energy

Photo by Jantine Doornbos on Unsplash

Reducing aggressive driving, removing rooftop cargo and extra weight, and reducing idling can save you gas money while making the roads safer.

Aggressive driving (speeding, rapid acceleration and braking) wastes gas. It can lower gas mileage by roughly 15% to 30% at highway speeds and 10% to 40% in stop-and-go traffic.

Driver feedback devices can help with more efficient driving. A recent study suggests that they can help the average driver improve fuel economy by about 3% and that those using them to save fuel can improve gas mileage by about 10%.

Sensible driving is safer for everyone, so more may be saved than gas money. Here are some tips to help improve your fuel economy this holiday travel season and year-round.

Observe the Speed Limit

While each vehicle reaches its optimal fuel economy at a different speed (or range of speeds), gas mileage usually decreases rapidly at speeds above 50 mph.

It can be assumed that each 5 mph driven over 50 mph is like paying an additional $0.27 per gallon for gas.

Observing the speed limit is also safer.

Fuel benefits of driving the speed limit	
Fuel Economy Benefit	7%-14%*
Equivalent Gasoline Savings	$0.27-$.054/gallon*

*Average savings, assuming drivers are willing to slow down 5-10 mph and fuel costs $3.83/gallon.

Avoid Hauling Cargo on the Roof

Hauling cargo on the roof of a vehicle increases aerodynamic drag (wind resistance) and lowers fuel economy.

Fuel benefits of removing roof cargo	
Fuel Economy Benefit	2%-17%
Equivalent Gasoline Savings	$0.08-$.65/gallon

A large, blunt roof-top cargo box, for example, can reduce fuel economy by around 2% to 8% in city driving, 6% to 17% on the highway, and 10% to 25% at Interstate speeds (65 mph to 75 mph).

Rear-mount cargo boxes or trays reduce fuel economy by much less—only 1% or 2% in city driving and 1% to 5% on the highway.

If an external cargo container is needed, removing it when it's not in use will save fuel and money.

Back to page 1

Remove Excess Weight
Avoid keeping unnecessary items in your vehicle, especially heavy ones. An extra 100 pounds in your vehicle could reduce your MPG by about 1%. The reduction is based on the percentage of extra weight relative to the vehicle's weight and affects smaller vehicles more than larger ones.

Fuel benefits of removing extra weight	
Fuel Economy Benefit	1%/100 lbs.
Equivalent Gasoline Savings	$0.04/gallon

Avoid Excessive Idling
Idling can use a quarter to a half gallon of fuel per hour, depending on engine size and air conditioner (A/C) use. Turn off the engine when the vehicle is parked. It only takes about 10 seconds worth of fuel to restart the vehicle.

Fuel costs savings	
Savings with A/C off	$0.01-$0.03
Savings with A/C on	$0.02-$0.04

Turning the engine off when the vehicle is parked can save money. Here are some tips to help further maximize gas savings.

- Limit engine starts to about 10 times per day on average in vehicles not equipped with a stop-start system. Occasionally exceeding this limit should not cause excessive starter wear.
- Assuming 10 starts a day aren't exceeded, any shutdown longer than 1 minute will save money.
- Limit electric accessory use during shutdown, particularly during longer shutdown periods.
- Drive at least 5 miles between start cycles to fully recharge the battery.

To promote idle reduction, refer to the U.S. Department of Energy's Clean Cities IdleBox Toolkit to get started.

Use Cruise Control
Using cruise control on the highway helps maintain a constant speed and, in most cases, will save gas. On newer cars cruise control has additional safety features to help the driver maintain proper distance from other vehicles and to be aware of local speed limits.

Note: Cost savings are based on an assumed fuel price of $3.83/gallon.

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Back to page 1