

SUSTAINABLE DRIVING FOR BUSINESS

Provision of a maintenance service often involves visiting different client sites in scattered locations and as such many of our member companies have high business mileages. The financial costs of engineer travel may be a significant proportion of your business outgoings, but it's also important to consider the environmental implications of this function.

Fuel use not only depletes our natural resources (even greener cars using biofuels and electricity have eco footprints associated with them), but also pollutes the atmosphere with CO2 and other gases and particulates that cause climate change and have a damaging effect on human health.

Greener driving can be achieved with a mixture of better planning of work and activities, change in behaviour when driving, and good vehicle maintenance. There's plenty of advice on various websites, such as the Highways Agency and DirectGov but we've got a few ideas to get you started.

As a company, changes can be made to purchasing decisions, work planning and staff training to provide a framework for greener driving. Consideration of the long-term cost savings that can be achieved by purchasing or leasing more efficient vehicles when it's time to renew is essential. In addition, all vehicles' efficiency can be improved by regular servicing, making sure tyres are adequately inflated, and changing air filters regularly. **From November, it will be a legal requirement for tyres to have eco-labelling, so they'll be rated from A-G on how well they perform with regard to fuel efficiency.**

Plan your routine maintenance jobs to give engineers the shortest route possible each day. For emergency maintenance and on-call work larger companies may want to invest in trackers for their vans, so you can pin point exactly who your closest engineer is. Make sure you send the right engineer and equipment for the job first time, with all the information they need (i.e. correct address, information on the fault/issue) to

avoid wasted journeys.

The AA says that driving at 70mph can use up to 9% more fuel than driving at 60mph, so encourage your drivers to stick to 60 mph on motorways. It's safer, you won't be breaking and accelerating as often, and you reduce air resistance.

At your next team meeting, why not get together and watch DirectGov's eco driving video available on their Youtube channel, or similar (there are plenty of options out there!) for more advice.

Engineers can take action too, simply by changing some driving habits:

- **Travel light** - Only pack what you need for the day, extra weight means more fuel needed to drag it around with you
- **Bone idle?** - If you're waiting for someone or stopped at traffic lights or a railway crossing that will be longer than a minute or two, turn off your engine!
- **Hot and bothered?** - Air conditioning uses a lot of fuel (as do headlights, heated rear windscreen and demisters), so turn off when you're not using them. Remember that

open windows increase fuel use, especially at high speeds (because you're increasing air resistance)

- **Get in Gear!** - Change gear at the ideal time to keep your revs (rpm) low. Moving into higher gears earlier will achieve this; we all know the sound of our vehicle straining in too low a gear!
- **Plan your Route** - Know where you're going before you set off. Put the postcode in the sat nav, or have the route planned out to avoid having to take any detours.

Hopefully this has given you plenty to think about and a couple of activities you can start now to reduce your business fuel use. Remember, if you're travelling less than two miles, cars are very inefficient because they haven't had the time to warm up, so why not walk or cycle instead? **EJ**

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