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Gas Saving Myths

By John Harrison • Photograph Courtesy of Fuel Delivery Services, Inc.

EVERY CULTURE HAS its ideological blind spots. In time, these ideas become so profoundly rooted in its psyche that they're rarely debated and are eventually accepted as factual. Such is the case with a number of questionable and even humorous gas saving myths. So we decided to compile a list of the eight most commonly held misconceptions:

MYTH #1: Newer Gas Stations Have More Accurate Pumps. Since every state has a Weights and Means department responsible for regulating the proper measurement (fuel volume), vapor recovery and quality of motor vehicle fuels, the age of the pump does not make a difference. Field officers regularly examine fuel dispensers. Once the dispenser passes the inspection and meets all legal requirements, officers place a dated seal on the dispenser. If the dispenser does not pass the test, the department will take enforcement

actions to ensure the dispenser is repaired and recalibrated before it can be put back into service.

MYTH #2: Gas is Denser in the Morning. The time of day has a negligible effect on the volume of gas a pump dispenses. Density is defined as the ratio of mass to volume and while it's true the density of a liquid will increase when temperatures drop, the gasoline being pumped out of the ground is dispensed at a uniform (ground) temperature which doesn't change significantly during the course of the day.

MYTH #3: Avoid Filling Up When a Tanker is On Site. There's no arguing that when a station's underground tanks are being filled, it'll stir up any deposits at the bottom. However, the gas station's filters *should* remove any sediment well before it reaches the nozzle so it will not clog your bike's gas filter. Also, and as described in Myth #1, the Department

of Weights and Means not only inspects the pumps, but it periodically takes fuel quality samples for chemical analysis to ensure that the station meets state and national legal requirements.

MYTH #4: Only Buy Brand Name Gas. It's important to note even before addressing this myth that simply stated, octane is a measurement of how hard it is to ignite the gas and has nothing to do with the quality of the gas. With that said, one prevailing Internet theory holds that "top tier gasoline stations" provide a higher quality gas which will yield better economy. The fact is that the "brand" of the refinery that produced the gasoline is often different from the brand of the station. In other words, don't be too focused on only buying gas from Conoco or Mobil: with the exception of some additives, they aren't that different.

MYTH #5: Using a Higher Octane Will Improve Fuel Economy. "Pre-

mium” grade fuel is only required for motorcycles with relatively high compression ratios that are designed to use. When deciding on what grade of gasoline to use, we recommend first reading the owner’s manual to determine if a particular grade of gasoline is “required” or if it’s “recommended.” If premium fuel is recommended but not required, a lower grade of gas could be used if you’re willing to accept a reduction in performance and a very minor drop in fuel economy.

MYTH #6: Additives Don’t Work.

For the most part, this is a true statement. However, bogus gas additives that promise phenomenal performance and improved gas mileage — often referred to as “snake oils” — should not be confused with legitimate products like Chevron’s Techron or BG’s 44K, which are designed to clean the entire fuel system. Normal wear and tear, high temperatures and “bad” quality gasoline can contribute to a buildup of deposits on the fuel injectors, which inhibit performance. Using a *proven* fuel injection cleaner at least once a year will remove these deposits and help improve the efficiency of your engine.

MYTH #7: A Clean Motorcycle Will Provide Better Gas Mileage.

While the remains of a thousand bugs plastered across the front of your windscreen isn’t very attractive, it really won’t adversely affect the aerodynamics or the fuel economy. As an aside, by regularly cleaning your motorcycle, hopefully you will notice things like underinflated tires, worn parts, or other gas-robbing issues which *will* ultimately affect fuel economy.

MYTH #8: A New Air Filter Will Provide Better Gas Mileage.

Although properly maintaining your bike is imperative, if you have a modern bike with computer sensors that automatically adjust the fuel-air mixture as the filter becomes increasingly dirty, the engine will adjust to the changing conditions: at least as long as it does not become completely clogged and choke off the required air supply. Therefore, if you are on a modern, computer-controlled bike and get caught in a sand/dust storm while in the middle of a rally, you don’t have to worry about cleaning your air filter right away.

But hey, if you really feel the need to hold on to a myth when deciding where to fill up, that’s OK too. —

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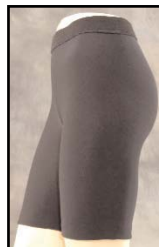
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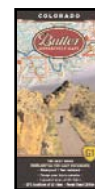
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