

Toronto Green Community offers EcoDriver tips

While walking and cycling might be the best forms of transportation when it comes to environmental impact, there are ways to make driving greener.

Toronto Green Community is sharing the EcoDriver program with Toronto residents to help their wallets and the environment. The program is a project of Green Communities Canada that helps drivers learn how to increase fuel efficiency and reduce greenhouse gas emissions from driving.

Paula Messina, executive director of Toronto Green Community, said while abstaining from driving might be best for the environment, they know it's not always possible or practical to advocate that option.

"There are people who realize there are people who can't (leave the car at home) so this is targeted at those people who have to be in a car, even fleets like taxis," she said.

Some of the tips are well known, while others might not be so obvious. By driving efficiently drivers can save fuel and reduce their vehicle's harmful greenhouse gas emissions. Idling for just 10 seconds uses more gas than restarting the engine so it's best to turn the engine off while waiting. In 10 minutes, the average car will burn through 300 ml of fuel. (A good reason to forgo the drive-thru).

Another way to be efficient is to slow it down. For every 10 km/h one drives above 100 km/h, fuel efficiency drops by 10 per cent. That means driving 120 km/h on the highway is like paying 20 per cent more for fuel.

"A lot of it is common sense, like not driving with a heavy load when you don't have to or hard stopping at a light," Messina said. "Those are things you can easily incorporate."

Proper maintenance can also increase fuel efficiency. Maintaining proper tire pressure is one way to cut down fuel costs and prolong the life of the tires - just one tire under-inflated by eight psi, can increase gas consumption by four per cent and reduce the life of the tire by 15,000 km. Regular oil changes are also advocated by the EcoDriver program as worn-out oil or the wrong grade of oil can increase fuel use by two per cent. Tune ups are also important as it can reduce fuel consumption by up to 15 per cent and also reduce smog causing emissions.

Messina said there is a 35 per cent difference between the most efficient cars and the least efficient cars so following these tips can make a big difference for the planet - reducing fuel consumption by 10 tanks per year can reduce one's personal greenhouse gas emissions by almost one tonne - and one's bank account.

"With fuel prices being what they have been the last couple of years it makes a lot of sense," she said.

Other ways to cut down on driving-generated emissions are by walking or cycling, taking transit, carpooling, or by telecommuting - even working from home one day a week can cut commuting emissions by 20 per cent.

Visit www.EcoDriver.org for more information. **Toronto Green Community is providing presentations about the program to workplaces, community centres and faith groups. (That is great! You are covering all options!)** Contact Messina at paula@torontogreen.ca to schedule a presentation.

<http://www.insidetoronto.com/news/local/article/652826--toronto-green-community-offers-ecodriver-tips>