



FIGHTING FUEL SCAMS: "GAS-SAVING" PRODUCTS

by Texas Attorney General Greg Abbott

HIGH GASOLINE PRICES have led many Texas consumers to consider the use of "gas-saving" products. Consumers should be cautious about automotive devices or gas additives that claim to save money or improve fuel efficiency. The Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) has tested many of these products and devices to determine whether their use will result in any significant improvement to fuel economy and found the savings to be small, if any.

Several different products are available on the market today. For instance, air bleed devices allow air to feed into the carburetor. Vapor bleed devices are similar, bubbling inducted air through a water and anti-freeze mixture that is held in a container within the engine compartment. Water injection devices inject a solution into the engine and pump the fluid into the engine's air intake system.

Some products claim to heat the fuel before it enters the carburetor. Fuel additives are poured directly into the gas tank to improve the performance of your vehicle. Some devices claim to modify the operation of certain vehicle components, while other products claim to change the molecular structure of gasoline.

Last month, my office filed a lawsuit against BioPerformance, Inc., a Texas-based company that marketed a "top secret gas pill" it falsely claimed would drastically improve fuel efficiency by

30 percent or more and cut harmful emissions by up to 50 percent.

Laboratory tests conducted by scientists at the University of Texas at Austin and at a Florida university concluded the pill was little more than naphthalene, the chemical found in mothballs. Experts also found that the product could actually decrease engine performance. At start-up costs of between \$300 and \$500, BioPerformance sponsors were encouraged to purchase the pills in bulk and then recruit others to become dealers in an illegal pyramid scheme that has defrauded consumers around the country.

From ignition control devices to fuel line heaters to pressure regulators, all of these different gas-saving products attempt to control the mix and delivery of fuel to the engine in an effort to improve consumption. The terminology can be confusing and deceptive, pointing to the need for consumers to be extremely cautious.

Be wary of ads that claim a product can improve gas mileage by high percentage margins, and be skeptical of commercials that show allegedly "satisfied customers" who claim that their gas mileage increased due to the use of a certain device. These claims can be misleading or even completely fabricated. Most consumers do not have the means to accurately test the impact of such products on gas mileage. The condition of the car, the roads and the weather are all variable

factors that can affect fuel economy.

Installing these products and devices on your vehicle could cause your manufacturer warranty to be voided, because they are not considered factory equipment. Also, long-term use of such products may damage your vehicle.

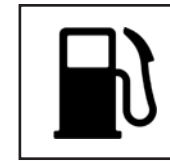
No government agency has endorsed any gas-saving products or devices, so be skeptical of such claims. In fact, the Federal Trade Commission notes several practical steps consumers can take on their own to improve fuel efficiency and combat the high cost of fuel.

The simplest way to improve fuel economy is to practice sensible driving. Excessive braking and acceleration, speeding and other aggressive driving habits can negatively affect gas mileage.

Avoid unnecessary idling, which wastes fuel and pollutes the air. Keep your engine tuned, your tires properly inflated, and your oil changed to save fuel and keep your car operating better and longer.

We are all concerned about the rising cost of fuel and its effect on consumers. Some gas-saving products and devices may work, but consumers should remember they can take easy steps on their own to help reduce the amount of fuel they use. If you have encountered a deceptive or fraudulent gas-saving product or device, do not hesitate to contact my office

POINTS TO REMEMBER



GAS-SAVING
PRODUCTS
AND DEVICES

To file a complaint with
the Attorney General of Texas:

(800) 252-8011

www.oag.state.tx.us

For information about
EPA test procedures and test results:

(734) 214-4925

www.epa.gov/otaq/consumer.htm

For additional information on
fuel prices and gas mileage tips:

www.fueleconomy.gov/

Federal Trade Commission
1-877-FTC-HELP (1-800-382-4357)

www.ftc.gov/



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