

Environment and driving in today's society

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The environment has become our times' crucially important issue and the global community is finding it difficult to cope with the environmental problems. There is nobody on this planet that will not be affected. Most of us must do our best to keep this problem in check; otherwise the situation will get much worse. To find solutions to the environmental problems demands research in many disciplines. It is no longer enough to apply only the natural scientific perspectives. We must also find out how societies can be made more environmentally friendly. Social scientific environmental research is carried out in many fields of science. As the earth's population grows and more and more become involved in a global consumer society, competition for the available land area also increases. Land use has suddenly become a sensitive issue in world politics.

With skyrocketing gasoline prices being what they are, the hazards of global warming, and the public's concern about foreign oil, more and more automakers are offering electric, hybrid, and alternative fuel vehicles. While purchasing a green vehicle is a great start toward reducing the environmental impacts of driving. Of course, the vehicle you drive is the most important factor, but your driving habits and how well you maintain your vehicle will also impact the environment in a positive or negative way.

A Greenhouse Gas (GHG) is any gas that, when released into the atmosphere, traps infrared radiation (heat) and causes a slow heating of the planet. The most common GHGs are: carbon dioxide (CO₂), methane (CH₄), chlorofluorocarbons (CFCs) and nitrous oxides (N₂O). CO₂ makes up about 70 percent of total greenhouse gas emissions, which is why many vehicles produce several times their weight in greenhouse gases each year. In fact, most of the fuel you put in your gas tank becomes GHG emissions!

In hot weather, park in the shade when possible and open doors and windows to cool the car off before you turn on the air conditioning. Window shades also help cut down on heat and sun damage. Use of AC increases fuel consumption, and involves using fluids that are potentially harmful to the environment. Avoid driving in rush hour traffic. Start and stop driving increases emissions of smog-forming pollutants. Go easy on the brakes and the accelerator. Jack-rabbit starts result in wasted fuel and releases more pollutants into the environment. Let your vehicle coast to a stop as much as possible and save wear and tear on your brakes.

Obey the speed limit. If you drive 110 km/h instead of 90 km/h, you will lower your fuel economy by almost 10 percent, and increase exhaust pollution output. Instead of taking separate trips, combine them as much as possible. An engine that is already warm generates far less air pollution. Catalytic converters only work well when the exhaust has warmed them to a certain temperature. If you cold-start your vehicle and drive just two miles, the emissions are much higher than driving an additional two miles to stop at the grocery after your usual evening commute. Combining several short trips into one can make a big difference when it comes to driving green. Use your tire gauge! Properly inflated tires are a must. Fuel economy decreases by about two percent per every three pounds below the recommended pressure. Check the air pressure regularly; especially before going on a long trip. Your tires will last longer, too. A tune-up can have a substantial impact on your fuel

economy. Check fluids, spark plugs, and the air filter. Change the oil (to go even greener, ask for recycled oil) and replace worn belts. Rotate the tires and have your wheels aligned for even tire wear. Avoid topping off the gas tank after the automatic nozzle shuts off. Spilled gasoline is carcinogenic to breathe, evaporates into the atmosphere, and can leak into the ground, pollute the water, and poison wildlife. Save on fuel and decrease pollution by biking or participating in a car or van pool to get to work, and share rides to and from the kids' activities. By following these simple tips and guidelines, you can do your part to offset global warming and help the environment. Go green!

The most crucial threat to our environment today is pollution. Everywhere I go I can see the earth being polluted in some type of way. Whenever I pass by a chemical plant, the fumes in the air are so foul that they make my head hurt. I can hardly breathe while I am inside of a car passing through the contamination. So just think of how bad it is for every living thing outside in the open air. Automobiles release a gas called carbon monoxide that can be poisonous and harmful to us. Still, millions of people drive to work every day because that is the most efficient travel they can use. This neglect for safer transportation causes more and more pollution as the years go by.

Not only do we as humans pollute our environment involuntary, but a lot of times people will litter just because they are too lazy to throw their trash away. How many times do you see trash thrown on the streets somewhere whenever you are traveling? I can't count how many times because they are so numerous. Littering not only hurts our environment, but it harms everything living inside of that environment. Animals who are looking for a bite to eat accidentally chew on the trash that we leave on the ground and choke to death. The ocean gets polluted all the time and people seem to care less. Yet, when we destroy the sea creatures and their ecosystem, we end up hurting ourselves as well. There may not be enough fish for us to eat in years to come. Who knows the extent of the damages we have done to our environment?

The only way we can reverse the process is if we start now. Already, technology is trying to improve our transportation systems by creating devices such as the electronic automobile, which is a car, ran by electricity instead of by fuel. There are also some ways we won't have to pollute the air by using fossil fuels instead of burning chemicals in the air. There are different ways to generate electricity. We can have solar electricity, which is powered by the sun. Wind mills can generate wind electricity to supply our homes with electricity. There are probably much more techniques that we haven't even came up with. So funding different research programs dealing with the environment would be very beneficial as well. Although people are supposed to hold themselves accountable for littering, we can help make their decision much easier if only we provided more choices for them. I use to see recycling bins all around the community.

Now I rarely see a trash can when I look out the window of a car. The government can play a big role on improving the environment if they purchased waste baskets and recycling bins to place inside and outside of every place of business, in every community, and near every highway. On numerous containers and plastic bottles I usually see a sign at the bottom that

says, "Please Recycle." The only problem with that is there aren't enough places that have containers to recycle in. The people I know who recycle do it on their own. They have to separate their trash themselves and drive it to the recycling place. That is too much work for a lot of people. So they just decide not to recycle. Once we have the facilities and provide the containers to recycle, then I know that the littering problem will improve dramatically. Just taking one step at a time to a safer and cleaner environment can cause a major difference.

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