

Winter Fuel Economy



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October marks the start of the winter driving season, and cold temperatures and icy roads can decrease your vehicle's fuel economy by as much as 10%.

There are three primary reasons why your mileage may decline during cold weather:

Increased resistance. Cold air is denser, increasing aerodynamic drag. Tires lose pressure faster, increasing rolling resistance over the road surface. Icy roads decrease tire traction, and we tend to drive slower in such conditions.



Cold engines. Lubricating oil thickens in the cold, increasing engine friction until your car warms up. Idling to warm your engine gets you zero miles per gallon. Batteries are less efficient in the cold, so you may see a significant drop in winter mileage if you drive a hybrid.

Fuel specs. Winter fuel specifications require more butane, a light hydrocarbon. Butane is less dense and therefore contains less energy, which slightly lowers fuel economy.

To minimize winter mileage effects, combine trips to take advantage of a warm engine. Keep tires fully inflated, and park in a warm garage if possible. It's better to warm up your engine by driving instead of idling. Instead of using cabin heat to melt frost, scrape it from your windows. Remove excess weight, such as roof racks, accumulated snow or your golf clubs, to lessen wind and rolling resistance.

For more information, visit fueleconomy.gov/feg/coldweather.shtml