



ENERGY E-TIPS

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EPA Approves Ethanol Increase to 15% in Gasoline.

In a press release on Oct. 13, 2010, the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) made its announcement approving the increase of ethanol-blend gasoline from 10% to 15% for use in 2007 or newer model-year (MY) cars and light trucks. This edition of ENERGY E-TIPS was developed in reply to questions from Arkansas citizens to explore the details of this announcement and its meaning to consumers.

The facts

The full text of the press release can be found at the link provided in the references. Here are some items to consider:

- Since 1979, conventional cars, light trucks and non-road vehicles have been approved for blends of 10% ethanol (E10).
- This recent ruling was done in part to meet the requirements of the Energy Independence and Security Act of 2007, which mandates an increase in the overall volume of renewable fuels into the marketplace, reaching a 36 billion gallon total in 2022.
- This recent ruling is only for 2007 or newer model year (MY) cars and light trucks that are gasoline-powered.
- A new label to identify the 15% ethanol blend (E15) is being developed.
- A decision is pending for 2000 to 2006 vehicles to use this blend.
- Some other conditions need to be met before this fuel will be introduced to the market. These include, but are not limited to, submission of a complete E15 fuels registration application from the industry and changes to some states' laws to allow for the use of E15.

Can my vehicle use E15?

The following list is provided from the EPA Fuels and Fuel Additives website on E15 fuel:

- MY 2007 and newer cars.
- MY 2007 and newer light-duty trucks.
- MY 2007 and newer medium-duty passenger vehicles.

What vehicles and engines may NOT use E15?

- Motorcycles.
- Vehicles with heavy-duty engines, such as school buses, transit buses and delivery trucks.
- Off-road vehicles (such as boats and snowmobiles).
- Engines in off-road equipment, such as lawnmowers and chainsaws.
- MY 2001-2006 cars, light-duty trucks and medium-duty passenger vehicles (pending a waiver decision with respect to those vehicles).
- MY 2000 and older cars, light-duty trucks and SUVs.

Availability

There are still some additional steps needed for E15 to become available in Arkansas. Some oil companies may have concerns over offering E15 due to the confusion over labeling to avoid fueling mistakes. According to the Arkansas Annotated Code 15-13-204 and 4-108-212, The Arkansas Bureau of Standards of the State Plant Board has the authority for governing engine and alternative fuels in the State of Arkansas. The Bureau does have a Petroleum Quality Law that governs how petroleum is tested and sold in the state. Before E15 would be available in Arkansas, it would need to have approval from this group.

The pros

EPA and other bodies have praised this decision, stating the following benefits:

- Decreased need on foreign oil – Ethanol is widely produced in the United States, and increasing the percentage of ethanol used in motor fuel is thought to decrease our reliance on foreign oil.
- Help to reach government standards – The Energy Independence and Security Act of 2007 states that the total amount of biofuels added to gasoline is required to increase to 36 billion gallons by 2022, from 4.7 billion gallons in 2007. While 21 billion gallons are to be derived from non-cornstarch products (e.g. sugar or cellulose) by 2022, this ethanol regulation helps meet this law.

The concerns

Some groups have expressed concerns about the use of E15, including the following:

- Because ethanol is currently mass-produced using corn as its feedstock, there is concern that increasing the ethanol standard will increase the demand for corn, and thus increase the price of it if the supply stays the same.
- The Renewable Fuels Standard (RFS2) Regulatory Impact Analysis released in February 2010 stated that ethanol results in more greenhouse gas emissions than gasoline.
- Ethanol does have less BTU/gallon than gasoline, so an increase in ethanol will decrease fuel efficiency.

The EPA announcement is just the first step in increased ethanol consumption, and other steps will be needed for it to be sold in Arkansas. When it does appear, be sure to look at the labeling to make sure that your vehicle can and should take the fuel.

References:

- EPA News Release “EPA Grants E15 Waiver for Newer Vehicles/A new label for E15 is being proposed to help ensure consumers use the correct fuel”:
<http://yosemite.epa.gov/opa/admpress.nsf/d0cf6618525a9efb85257359003fb69d/bf822ddbec29c0dc852577bb005bac0f!OpenDocument>
- EPA Webpage “E15 (a blend of gasoline and ethanol)”: <http://www.epa.gov/otaq/regs/fuels/additive/e15/>
- Arkansas Code of 1987 Annotated Official Edition 15-13-204
- Bureau of Standards Arkansas State Plant Board website:
<http://plantboard.arkansas.gov/Standards/Pages/default.aspx>

Samy Sadaka
ssadaka@uaex.edu
Rachel Lipsey
rlipsey@uaex.edu

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University of Arkansas, United States Department of Agriculture and County Governments Cooperating.

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