

# Need Gas? Better Buy The Paper First

*A tutorial on filling up in 2007*

**R**emember the days when you'd drive to the corner gas station, fill up the tank then go inside and buy a newspaper and lottery ticket? Well, we're still doing that – but perhaps in a different order.

But then again, when you're talking about spending an extra \$20 billion within five months, which the Government Accountability Office (GAO) reported that U.S. consumers had collectively spent this year because of increased gas prices, maybe a little time – and research – is required. So, instead of filling up the tank first, you probably want to buy the day's newspaper so you can research your gasoline investment:

- First, thoroughly check page 1 for news from the Middle East
- Follow that by looking below the fold or inside Section One for word of any accidents involving U.S. refineries, pipelines or fuel carriers
- Find the day's cost for a barrel of oil
- Next, check the weather and see if any depressions could be developing into tropical storms or hurricanes
- Survey the stock market futures
- Glance at the date to see if refineries are switching over to their season blends
- And lastly, check the day's forecasted high temperature

## Ohio Regular Unleaded Gasoline Prices (per gallon)

	Aug. '04	Aug. '05	Aug. '06	May '07*	Aug. '07
Akron	\$1.80	\$2.35	\$2.85	\$3.44	\$2.60
Cincinnati	\$1.85	\$2.37	\$3.00	\$3.47	\$2.62
Cleveland	\$1.87	\$2.50	\$2.94	\$3.45	\$2.63
Columbus	\$1.89	\$2.46	\$3.01	\$3.49	\$2.60
Dayton	\$1.90	\$2.48	\$2.98	\$3.48	\$2.51
Toledo	\$1.86	\$2.44	\$2.98	\$3.47	\$2.59
U.S. Avg.	\$1.85	\$2.58	\$3.01	\$3.24	\$2.87

\*record high prices  
(GasBuddy Organization, Inc.)

*Per-gallon gasoline prices for regular unleaded reached all-time highs throughout Ohio earlier this year. Here is how gasoline prices have escalated over the past four years.*

## EPA LOOKING TO MOW DOWN POLLUTANTS

**M**any think that smell on a hot summer day is of freshly cut Kentucky bluegrass; and if you can smell it, you probably believe you deserve a pat on the back because you're being environmentally friendly by leaving the clippings to decompose.

C'mon people, put your head in the sprinkler and wake up.

The U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) has moved from automobiles, to diesel trucks (on- and off-road), to grills, fire pits and Chimineas, now to gas-powered lawn tools in an effort to cut down on air pollution.

Gas mowers pollute more than one might think. According to EPA spokesperson John Millett, **a push mower is like having 11 cars idling** on your lawn, and if you use a decked-out riding deck on your mower it's like 34 cars idling on your personal green space.

A Swedish study reports that **one hour use of a lawn mower produces the same pollution as taking a 100-mile car trip** – or each of the 11 cars idling on your yard for nine-mile jaunts.

The reason for the quick check of the weather is **the higher the temperatures the more you'll pay to fill up**. How much more? Consumer watchdog groups warn that **higher temperatures could cost consumers between 3 and 9 cents per gallon**. The reason is physics (aka "hot fuel"); as temperatures rise, liquid gasoline expands and the amount of energy in each gallon drops.

Seeing that **U.S. drivers are paying in excess of \$1.5 billion more during the hot-weather months for gasoline because of simple physics – and gas retailers are not making any allowances for it**, Ohio Rep. Dennis Kucinich is heading up a hearing as chairman of the House Subcommittee on Domestic Policy. "People are paying for gasoline they're not getting," said Kucinich, a Democratic presidential candidate.

For nearly a century, the gasoline industry and regulators have agreed that a gallon of gasoline is 231 cubic inches at 60 degrees Fahrenheit. But as temperatures rise and gasoline expands, it takes more than a gallon of gas to produce the same amount of energy as a gallon of gas in colder weather.

The hot fuel issue has led to as many as 20 federal lawsuits – mostly in warm weather states – accusing retailers of taking advantage of consumers.

If the aforementioned 60-degree standard for gasoline – or the weather for that matter – doesn't have you hot under the collar, go ahead and buy your Ohio Pick 3 ticket; with the price of gas this summer you may have to hit the lottery in order to fill up.

Ohioans well know the effect high gas prices have had on their budgets, as they were paying record highs in May when the price per gallon for regular unleaded reached anywhere from \$3.207 in the Youngstown-Warren area to \$3.438 in Columbus in the days immediately preceding Memorial Day Weekend. As the average price of regular unleaded gasoline rose \$1.05 per gallon nationally (32 percent) through the first five months of 2007, the higher gas prices had already cost every U.S. passenger an extra \$150 apiece.

The increased gas prices – and the resulting \$70 fill-ups, which saw some credit card users have the pumps automatically shut off to discourage credit fraud – left consumers with less income to spend on other goods and services.

**The reasons given for higher gasoline prices, according to the GAO, are mergers in the oil**

**industry** have cut down on competition with the forming of mega oil companies; a large amount of **oil refining capacities being offline, and thus low fuel inventories**; and a **strong demand** for gasoline.

Ironically, increased gas prices didn't mean Americans were buying less gas or driving less. AAA estimated nearly a 1 percent increase, or 328,800 more Americans traveling on the highways this Fourth of July compared to last year.

**Despite the record gas prices, there has been less talk of suspending gas tax collections.** Where in past years, higher pump prices would lead to legislation being introduced to suspend the gas tax, **consumers and government officials are becoming smarter** – it must be all that newspaper reading – **on the importance of motor tax collections.** More and more **Ohioans are realizing that gas taxes are a user fee; the more you drive, the more you pay for the upkeep of the state's transportation infrastructure.**

The combined total of the Ohio (28 cents/gallon) and federal (18.4 cents/gallon) gas taxes equates to 46.4 cents/gallon – or only 15 percent on a \$3 gallon of gasoline. And while consumers believe they may experience some momentary relief at the pump because a gasoline tax is suspended, it will come back to cost them even more. In 2000, as a result of Illinois and Indiana legislators trying to give their states' drivers a 60-day hiatus from high gas prices, they suspended their state's gas tax collections; consumers saved about \$10-\$20 but Indiana ended up losing about \$40 million in collections and Illinois reported a \$300-million loss in potential revenue.

Another reason not to suspend gas taxes during periods of high prices is that **taxes don't affect the rise and fall of prices at the pump.** For example, Ohio's 28-cents/gallon state gas tax is nearly 10 cents a gallon higher than Indiana's and California's, but motorists earlier this year in San Francisco paid \$3.57 for a gallon of regular unleaded gasoline the same week that consumers paid \$2.64 and \$2.60 in Indianapolis and Columbus, respectively. In August, motorists in California were paying \$2.97/gallon while motorists in Indiana were paying \$2.72/gallon and Ohio drivers were paying \$2.69/gallon.

Fortunately, at the writing of this issue of *Infrastructure Insight*, the per-gallon gas prices had dropped throughout Ohio nearly 59 cents/gallon since May's record high. Stay tuned, though, for further developing news (i.e. get your hands on a newspaper – and lottery ticket).

**Lawnmowers and similar gas-powered equipment** like snow and leaf blowers, trimmers, tillers and chainsaws **produce about 10 percent of the pollution from “mobile sources”** – the category which also includes cars and trucks. With an estimated 38-million lawnmowers in the nation and each used an average of 25 hours a year, according to the Outdoor Power Equipment Institute, that’s a formula for a lot of pollution.

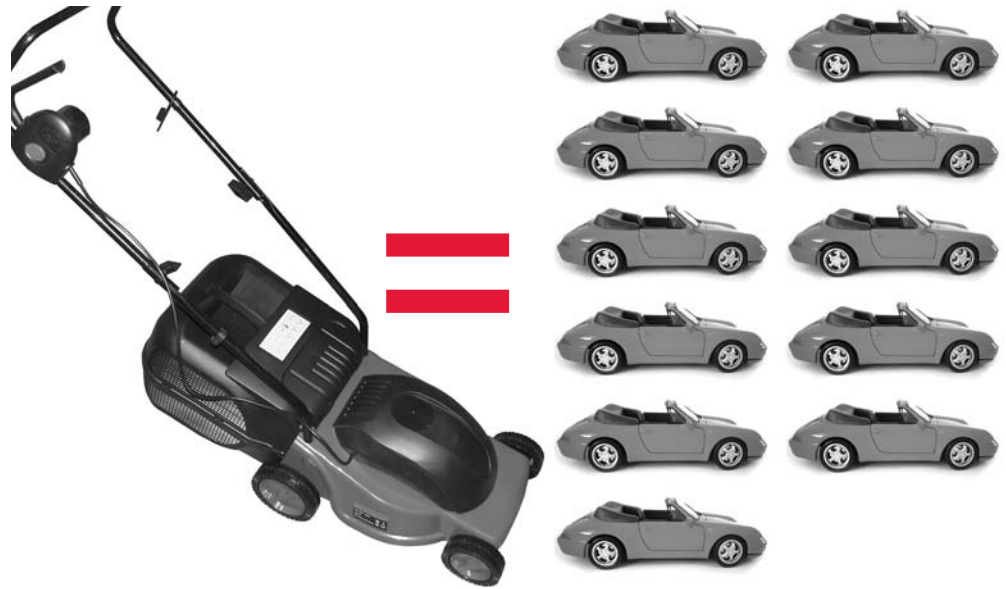
How much? According to a *Columbus Dispatch* article, “Fresh-cut Grass Smells of Smog,” the Lake Michigan Air Directors Consortium estimates that during the summer months in central Ohio, gas-powered lawn and garden tools on a daily basis emit 391.7 tons of carbon monoxide, 22.2 tons of hydrocarbons, 3.9 tons of nitrogen oxides, 0.7 tons of fine particles and 0.2 tons of sulfur dioxide.

Pollutants really add up when you consider that more than 75 percent of Ohio’s 4.8-million housing units in the 2000 U.S. Census were listed as single-family homes; that would be approximately 3.6-million lawns – not counting lawn care for businesses, office parks and apartment complexes.

As it has for other pollution sources, the EPA has formulated exhaust standards for small machines – like lawnmowers and weed whackers – that are to be phased in this year. The goal is to reduce hydrocarbons by nearly 60 percent.

While the EPA is telling manufacturers what emission standards to meet, it isn’t telling them how to get there.

One idea to reduce lawn mower and tool emissions is to outfit them with catalytic converters, which cars have been using since the 1970s and have transformed most car exhausts into harmless compounds.



**According to the U.S. EPA, a push mower produces the same amount of pollutants as 11 idling automobiles. Using a riding lawnmower produces the same amount of pollution as 34 idling vehicles.**

According to the *Columbus Dispatch*, **under EPA’s proposal**, mowers currently in use would not have to be replaced or equipped with filters. But **manufacturers of new gas-powered mowers, trimmers, blowers and edgers would have to update their products by 2011.**

However, while the Swedish study’s author Roger Westerholm says instituting a catalytic converter on lawn equipment would reduce hydrocarbons by 80 percent, Outdoor Power Equipment spokesperson Peggy Douglas said, “From a consumer standpoint, catalytic converters would probably make the cost of a mower very, very high.”

As a comparison of what consumers will probably pay in the future for cleaner-burning lawn tools, in California, regulated gas-powered lawn equipment runs 15-17 percent

higher than before. The proposed EPA standards would equal California’s.

To find out how much pollution your lawn equipment is generating, visit: [www.etc-cte.ec.gc.ca/databases/fuel-calc\\_e.html](http://www.etc-cte.ec.gc.ca/databases/fuel-calc_e.html).

## GREENING UP YOUR LAWNS

Here are tips to protecting the environment while working in the yard:

- Avoid spilling gasoline
- Maintain equipment
- Consider cleaner options (e.g. electrically powered tools)
- Use manual tools
- Reduce mowing time (e.g. decrease lawn area with shrubs; use low-maintenance turf grasses)
- Recycle old equipment

(Source: U.S. EPA)

# IS ETHANOL PUTTING THE HUNGRY HORSE BEFORE THE EMPTY CART?

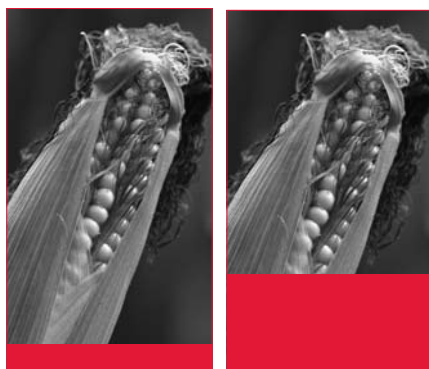
Ohio started the year labeled as the largest corn-producing state without an ethanol plant, but with more than five facilities under construction – that is changing. However, is it a good thing?

While ethanol-producing facilities are being marketed as being good for the farmers, good for the air, good for global warming and good for breaking the nation's shackles from dependence on Middle East oil, some reports are urging the U.S. to slow down on its "all for ethanol, ethanol for all" talk.

This past April, U.S. Sen. Sherrod Brown, the first Ohio senator to sit on the Agriculture Committee in nearly 40 years, visited construction of the Summit Ethanol plant in Leipsic in western Ohio. At the time, with his home state having only one plant – that being a small Medina facility that produces ethanol from beverage waste – Sen. Brown was calling for the Buckeye State to "become the Silicon Valley of alternative energy."

Tap the brakes Ohio. Only a month before Sen. Brown's proclamation of Ohio's quest to become Bio-Fuel Valley, *Ethanol Producer Magazine* listed only six Ohio ethanol facilities under construction – in Bloomingburg, Coshocton, Fostoria, Greenville, Leipsic and Lima. When completed, Ohio's ethanol facilities would produce a combined 384-million gallons a year. As a nation, **the U.S. will produce around 6-billion gallons of corn ethanol this year.** That's a proverbial drop in the bucket when you consider the nation's "21-million barrel-a-day oil addiction," as reported in the Aug. 9, 2007 issue of *Rolling Stone*.

So with, 19.6 gallons of motor fuel produced from one barrel of refined crude oil, the U.S. consumes approxi-



Gasoline  
3.5%

U.S. Corn Crop  
20%

*The nation's current ethanol production equates to only 3.5% of the United States' gasoline consumption. However, it takes 20% of the current U.S. corn crop in order to produce that amount of ethanol.*

mately 411.6-million gallons of gasoline each day – which equates to 150.2 billion gallons a year.

While granted the United States will soon have nearly 125 ethanol producing plants in operation, the *Rolling Stone's* National Affairs article, "The Ethanol Scam," points out other questions and concerns regarding ethanol.

According to *Rolling Stone*, "current ethanol production represents only 3.5 percent of our gasoline consumption – yet it consumes 20 percent of the entire U.S. corn crop." Because of demand, the price of corn has doubled since 2005, which has resulted in U.S. consumers experiencing a 3-percent increase in the first five months of this year in beef, poultry and pork prices. Outside the U.S., because the nation provides two-thirds of the world's corn exports, red flags are already being raised regarding hunger in Third World countries. According to University of Minnesota economists C. Ford Runge and Benjamin Senauer in a recent *Foreign Affairs* article, filling an SUV's gas tank with pure ethanol requires more than 450 pounds of corn – roughly enough calories to feed one person for a year.

Globally, corn products have skyrocketed because of ethanol's growing demand, tortilla prices have increased 60 percent in Mexico, butter prices are up 40 percent in Europe, and China is paying 20 percent more for pork.

The *Rolling Stone* article also questions the chances of fulfilling the dreams of politicians, who want the U.S. to produce upwards of 65-billion gallons of ethanol within the next 20 years.

While recent federal changes have thankfully eliminated the 5.4 cents per gallon "ethanol penalty" from Ohio's transportation funding – which formerly cost the Ohio Department of Transportation about \$150 million a year, transportation officials still have concerns. While a gallon of ethanol now carries the same 28-cents per-gallon state tax as a gallon of gas, caution is advised that we don't set up ethanol for a big fall. Putting too much emphasis on one bio-fuel, especially one that has too many unanswered questions, is like putting the horse before the cart.

And in the case of ethanol, that may result in both an empty cart and a hungry horse.

# NEW NUMBER MAKES DIGGING LESS DANGEROUS

*811 is new "call before you dig" hotline*

Summer is the do-it-yourself project time in and around the home, such as planting trees, tilling gardens and other jobs that might involve digging in your yard. With the advent of the new 811 "Call Before You Dig" number, there is now another avenue to also make sure those projects are done safely.

The national Call 811 campaign began May 1; 811 is a federally mandated, FCC designated number designed to eliminate the confusion of multiple "Call Before You Dig" numbers and help save lives by minimizing damages to underground utilities. Ohio's 811 service began in June, with live operators on hand 24/7, and the whole process of reporting projects taking an average of five minutes. Utility companies are required to respond within 48 hours, excluding weekends and legal holidays.

Homeowners often make risky assumptions about whether or not they should get their utility lines marked, but **every digging job requires a call – even small projects like planting trees and shrubs.** And in Ohio, you are actually in violation of state law if you don't check with the utility companies.

"If you break ground, you are required to call," said Abby Dornon, Public Relations and Communications coordinator for the Ohio Utilities Protection Service (OUPS).

With a publicity campaign in place to promote the new national number, the target audience is diggers – professional excavators and do-it-yourself homeowners. A survey conducted prior to the start of the 811 campaign found that **roughly half of Americans have either done or are planning to do some type of digging project at their homes, yet only a third of those individuals have called or will call to get their utility lines marked.**

Digging without calling can disrupt service to an entire neighborhood, harm you and those around you and potentially result in fines and repair costs. Calling 811 before every digging job gets your underground utility lines marked for free and helps prevent undesired consequences.



Previously, Ohioans have been instructed to call OUPS at either 800-362-2764 or 800-925-0988 before doing any excavation. Both numbers remain in service. "It doesn't matter (which number is called) as long as people call to have the lines marked and they proceed to dig safely," Dornon said. "That's all that matters."

And the use of these call centers should not be discounted. Already this year, OUPS' Web site is reporting that state 1-800 call centers have fielded more than a half-million phone inquiries. Through the first few months of the program, nationally, more than 3.75-million calls have been received by the 811 number system.

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# The Ohio Construction Information Association Membership Application

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