



SUV and Pickup Gas Guzzling the “Driving Force”  
 Behind Large U.S. Appetite for Gas, Summer 2003 High Gas Prices  
*August 2003*

SUVs and pickups are far less fuel efficient than are cars. On average, SUVs get seven fewer miles to each gallon of gasoline than cars – pickups are even worse. According to real-world data from Environmental Protection Agency (EPA), 2002 SUVs average 17.3 miles per gallon (mpg) and pickups average 16.5 mpg, while 2002 cars average 24.4 mpg.<sup>1</sup>

- **SUV and Pickup Owners Hit Hard by High Gas Prices:** With gas prices currently at \$1.66 for a gallon of regular gas,<sup>2</sup> a driver of the average 2002 SUV will pay \$9.59 to drive 100 miles while the driver of an average 2002 car will only pay \$6.83. **In other words, the SUV driver will pay 40 percent more than the car driver for the same trip. Pickup drivers would pay 47 percent more than car drivers, at over \$10 for the same 100 miles traveled.**
- **Premium Gasoline Costs Even More Exorbitant for SUV Owners:** Many, if not all, new SUVs require premium gasoline, which is currently averaging \$1.83 per gallon. **With premium gasoline, a 100-mile-trip would cost an SUV driver \$10.58, or 55 percent more than what the driver of a car using regular gasoline would have to pay.**
- **Over a Year, the Costs Add Up:** At current prices for gas, driving an SUV or pickup instead of a car will cost owners between \$415 and \$530 extra over a year for gas.
- **Gas Consumption by SUVs and Pickups Hundreds of Gallons More Than Cars Per Year:** The average 2002 model SUV driver uses 40 percent more gas than the average 2002 model car driver – 5.78 gallons of gasoline for a 100 mile trip instead of 4.12 gallons. Pickups use even more, averaging 6.06 gallons for the same trip. **In total, model year 2002 SUVs in the U.S. consume about 250 gallons of gas more each year than cars, and pickups consume about 292 gallons more than cars.**

**Extra Costs for Driving an SUV or Pickup Instead of a Car – Prices for August 2003**

	EPA fuel economy rating for 2002	Average vehicle miles driven <sup>3</sup>	Annual gallons of gas consumed	Extra annual gallons consumed driving an SUV/ pickup	Cost per gallon average on 8-25-2003	Average annual cost of gasoline	Extra annual cost of driving an SUV or pickup
<b>Regular Gasoline</b>							
<b>SUV</b>	17.3	15,000	867	250	\$1.66	\$1,439.31	\$414.62
<b>Pickup</b>	16.5	15,000	909	292	\$1.66	\$1,509.09	\$484.40
<b>Car</b>	24.3	15,000	617		\$1.66	\$1,024.69	
<b>Premium Gasoline</b>							
<b>SUV</b>	17.3	15,000	867	250	\$1.83	\$1,586.71	\$457.08
<b>Pickup</b>	16.5	15,000	909	292	\$1.83	\$1,663.64	\$534.28
<b>Car</b>	24.3	15,000	617		\$1.83	\$1,129.63	

## SUV and Pickup Explosion Slurps Up Much of U.S. Gas Supply

The composition of the U.S. vehicle fleet dramatically changed between 1992 and 2001.<sup>4</sup> Over that period, SUV registrations nearly tripled, from 7,151,602 to 21,636,480 registrations – a 150 percent growth in proportion to the U.S. passenger vehicle fleet<sup>5</sup>-- and pickup registrations increased 40 percent, from 27,143,016 to 37,931,583. SUVs and pickups are now nearly half of all new vehicles sold.

- **Toll from Gas Guzzlers is Enormous:** The average model year 2001 SUV consumes 242 gallons more per year than the average model year 2001 car. Similarly, the average 2001 pickup consumes 278 gallons more a year than a car made in 2001.
- **SUV Explosion Is Changing the Composition of the On-Road Fleet:** If the ratio of SUVs and pickups to cars was the same in 2001 as it was in 1992, there would be 15 million more cars on the road, 13 million fewer SUVs and 5.5 million fewer pickup trucks.
- **1992 Benchmark Shows 1990s Light Truck Explosion Swallows 113 Million Barrels of Oil Annually, or 70 percent of Annual Imports from Iraq:** Therefore, if the proportion of SUVs and pickups on the road to cars in 2001 was the same as it was in 1992, 4.7 billion fewer gallons of gasoline would have been used in the year 2001 alone.<sup>6</sup> This savings represents nearly 113 million barrels of oil, or almost 70 percent of our 2002 imports from Iraq.

### The Light Truck Explosion Is Turning Back the Clock on Two Decades of U.S. Fleet Fuel Economy Gains

Since 1992, the average fuel economy of the U.S. passenger vehicle fleet declined from 21.7 mpg to a low of 20.4 in 2002. **In fact, 1981 was the last time the U.S. fuel economy level was this low (at 20.5 mpg).**<sup>7</sup> The nation is “stuck in reverse” on fuel economy because of the light truck explosion: According to a report published last spring by the Environmental Protection Agency, **the upsurge in light trucks (SUVs, vans and pickups), which average 6 mpg less than cars, is to blame for the decline in fuel economy of the overall vehicle fleet.**<sup>8</sup>

*For more information, see [www.betterSUV.org](http://www.betterSUV.org)*

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<sup>1</sup> Environmental Protection Agency, “Light-Duty Automotive Technology and Fuel Economy Trends: 1975 Through 2003,” EPA420-R03-006, April 2003.

<sup>2</sup> Cost per gallon: The average cost per gallon of gasoline on August 25, 2003, according to AAA's Media Site for Retail Gasoline Prices, was \$1.66 for regular and \$1.83 for premium (at <http://198.6.95.31/index.asp> visited 8-25-2003).

<sup>3</sup> Vehicle miles traveled (VMT): Data based on the National Personal Transportation Survey indicate that first-year travel is over 15,000, and the average numbers in Oak Ridge National Laboratories' Transportation Databook and the National Resources Council start at 15,600 for new vehicles.

<sup>4</sup> Registration data through 2001 are available from the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration.

<sup>5</sup> Data provided by National Highway Traffic Safety Administration engineer, originally from R.L. Polk registration data 1992-2001.

<sup>6</sup> (Assuming model year 2001 fuel economy levels for cars and light trucks.) EPA does not provide overall on-road fuel economy. *See supra* note 1.

<sup>7</sup> *Id.*

<sup>8</sup> *Id.*