

MotorWeek Transcripts

MotorNews '2009 Fuel Economy Update'

JESSICA SHEA CHOKSEY: With gas prices continuing their roller coaster ride, and spot shortages due to everything from hurricanes to panic buying, it's no wonder Americans continue to be fixated on fuel economy. So, what better time to check in on the latest in government fuel economy ratings.

The U.S. Department of Energy and the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) release the government Fuel Economy Guide in the fall of each year. For decades the guide has helped car buyers compare vehicle miles-per-gallon and fuel costs so that they can choose the most fuel-efficient models to meet their needs.

Easy to use, in print, online, and now even accessible by cell phones and PDAs, the 2009 Fuel Economy Guide is organized first by vehicle class and second in alphabetical order by manufacturer and model.

The vehicles with the highest fuel economy in each class are highlighted. In the two-seater class this year's leader is the smart fortwo. It tops out contenders with 33 miles-per-gallon city and 41 miles-per-gallon highway.

Well suited, the four-place Mini Cooper takes the lead in the mini-compact Car class. And with no surprise to us, Toyota's Yaris nails down the subcompact segment.

Honda's Civic Hybrid takes honors in the compact segment with 40 city and 45 highway. The best non-hybrid compact is the Volkswagen Jetta TDI diesel at 30 city and 41 highway.

Toyota's Prius is once again the winner for midsize car with a stunning 48 city and 45 highway ratings.

And for the large car class, the Hyundai Sonata edges out rivals at 22 city and 32 highway.

In the Wagon market, the Small category is headed by the Volkswagen Jetta TDI SportWagen, while the midsize class winner is the tall Kia's Rondo.

For the SUV, the Ford Escape Hybrid offers the best mileage. The Escape's efficiency is also available as the Mercury Mariner Hybrid and Mazda Tribute Hybrid.

Mazda also takes home the minivan prize for its compact Mazda 5 with ratings of 22 city and 28 highway.

While the Ford Ranger is the most fuel efficient small pickup you can buy at 21 city and 26 highway. It is also available wearing the Mazda B2300 badge.

The standard pickup class includes both mid-size and full-size models. The most efficient efforts here are the Chevrolet Silverado Hybrid and GMC Sierra Hybrid. For non-hybrids, it's the Dodge Dakota and Mitsubishi Raider at the top.

And, in the large van category, flex-fuel capable Chevrolet Express and GMC Savana models are the mileage champs for both cargo and passenger needs.

As for overall fuel economy leaders, hybrids and a diesel occupy the top spot in five categories for 2009, and their influence is sure to expand in the future.

Even better is the fact that the 2009 winners list is quite well rounded with a wide variety of manufacturers. That's a sign that leads us to believe that automakers are getting more serious about offering fuel efficient choices.

The on-line version of the Fuel Economy Guide is updated throughout the year, and while we encourage you to keep yourself posted, we'll be sure to track any changes that could affect your future vehicle choice. And that's it for this week's MotorNews.