

CLEARING THE AIR

A Publication of the California Air Resources Board

Vol. 1, No. 1 - October 1996

The Truth Behind California's Cleaner-Burning Gasoline

If you've been watching KGO-TV or listening to its two sister radio stations during the last several months, you've been hearing a lot about California's cleaner-burning gasoline. They've told you the gasoline was poorly tested, that it gets lousy mileage, that it may not really reduce air pollution, and that it probably damages your car's fuel system and causes car fires. Needless to say, we have received a lot of calls from concerned and angry KGO-TV viewers.

Well, in "Clearing The Air," we'll tell you a few things that may surprise you -- things about cleaner-burning gasoline that KGO-TV has ignored and isn't about to tell you. We're going to tell you how the Air Resources Board worked with respected fuels and automotive experts to develop and test the gasoline. We'll tell you how the gasoline has performed during the six months it has been in use in California. We'll tell you how it is reducing air pollution. And we'll lay to rest the four basic "myths" that KGO-TV has created about cleaner-burning gasoline, car fires, engine damage and poor fuel economy.

Most of all, we want you to know the truth about cleaner-burning gasoline. Normally, we're very happy to let the news media provide you with information, but KGO-TV and its sister radio stations simply haven't been telling you the whole, objective truth. So, we'll tell it to you ourselves.

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BREATHING EASIER -- THE BENEFITS OF CLEANER-BURNING GASOLINE

Q. What does cleaner-burning gasoline do for me?

A. Clean air benefits everyone. Smog and its major component, ozone, irritate the lungs, exacerbate respiratory ailments such as asthma and bronchitis, and contribute to premature aging of the lungs and various lung diseases. Cars and other gasoline-powered motor vehicles cause about 50 percent of California's smog.

Cleaner-burning gasoline reduces smog-forming emissions from motor vehicles by 15 percent. It also reduces toxic emissions sufficiently to reduce cancer risk from exposure to these toxics by 30 to 40 percent. These emission reductions have been confirmed by extensive motor-vehicle testing by the Air Resources Board and independently verified by the Auto/Oil Air Quality Improvement Research Program, a respected industry group.

Cleaner-burning gasoline is the single-biggest smog-reduction measure in California since the introduction of the catalytic converter in 1975. The air-quality benefits are comparable to eliminating all emissions from 3.5 million motor vehicles in California. No single measure in our history has reduced pollution by such a large amount in such a brief period of time. California gasoline now is the cleanest in the world.

Q. How do I know cleaner-burning gasoline is really reducing air pollution?

A. Air monitoring has verified that levels of cancer-causing benzene in the Bay Area's air averaged more than 50 percent less in spring and summer 1996 than a year earlier. That's because cleaner-burning gasoline has only half the benzene of earlier gasolines. Benzene is known to cause cancer in humans; leukemia is the form of cancer most commonly associated with long-term benzene exposure.

Verifying ozone trends is a longer, more complicated process. Currently, we are analyzing data that indicates that California's ozone levels continued to decrease in 1996.

Q. Has cleaner-burning gasoline caused any problems during its six months of use?

A. Our extensive contacts with the auto-repair industry and other associated groups indicated that cleaner-burning gasoline has not resulted in problems. The state's two major auto-repair trade groups, the California Service Station and Automotive Repair Association and the Automotive Trade Organizations of California, have said their members are not reporting any increases in fuel-system repair work. No automotive-fleet managers have reported any fuel-related problems to the Air Resources Board. Gasoline consumption in California does not indicate that the state's motor vehicles have experienced large decreases in fuel economy.

Issues pertaining to fuel leaks, car fires and fuel economy are explained in more detail in this report.

Q. How much is cleaner-burning gasoline really costing me?

A. Cleaner-burning gasoline on average costs about 10 cents more per gallon to make than earlier gasoline, and it reduces average fuel economy by 1 to 3 percent. Cleaner-burning gasoline is as cost-effective as other pollution-fighting measures.

Cleaner-burning gasoline was only one of a number of factors that sharply pushed up gas prices this past spring. These other factors included increases in crude-oil prices and refinery breakdowns. Gasoline prices

have been steadily dropping since the spring as crude oil prices have dropped and refineries have returned to full production. California gasoline prices on average are comparable to those in other western states.

Now we would like to answer questions concerning what we believe are the four primary "myths" about cleaner-burning gasoline that have been propagated by KGO-TV's broadcasts:

Myth #1: DOUSING THE FLAMES -- THE MYTH OF THE BURNING CAR

Q. KGO-TV says cleaner-burning gasoline sharply increases the risk of car fires. Why does the Air Resources Board disagree?

A. We do not believe that the evidence supports KGO-TV's claims. On Sept. 4, KGO-TV reported it had "proof" that cleaner-burning gasoline causes car fires because its survey of 70 Bay Area fire departments reportedly found 10 percent more car fires in June-July 1996 than the same two months in 1995. But these statistics do not prove a thing.

Car fires vary from year to year. For example, Oakland Fire Department statistics show that Oakland car fires in June-July 1996 were higher than in June-July 1995, but lower than in June-July 1992, 1993 and 1994. The California Department of Forestry, which provides fire-fighting services in many rural areas, reported a similar pattern for fuel-related car fires in its jurisdiction. The Office of the State Fire Marshal has advised us in writing that KGO-TV's "data would be more reliable if it covered several years and was not limited to only one year." The fire marshal's office recommended looking at car-fire data from at least the last five years.

We also question whether KGO-TV's data is complete enough to link any change in the number of car fires to cleaner-burning gasoline. The fire marshal's office told us that KGO-TV's car-fire data would be "suspect" unless it differentiates between fuel-related car fires and fires caused by factors unrelated to gasoline, such as hot brakes, upholstery fires, collisions and arson. Ten Bay Area fire departments have confirmed to us that the data they gave KGO-TV did not include the cause of the car fires. Only one fire department confirmed to us that it gave KGO-TV specific data on fuel-related car fires.

Furthermore, data compiled by vehicle manufacturers does not indicate that there is a car-fire problem. The auto companies are required by law to keep data on fires concerning their vehicles. General Motors and Ford have analyzed their car-fire data at our request and said they have not seen any change in California car fires relative to the rest of the country. The other car companies are still analyzing their data.

In addition, the 1995 cleaner-burning gasoline test program (which is explained in Myth #3) found no evidence that cleaner-burning gasoline leads to an increased rate of fuel leaks or fires.

Myth #2: PASSING THE ACID TEST -- THE MYTH OF MTBE AND CORROSION

Q. KGO-TV has identified a reason for the alleged increase in car fires. They say the fuel additive MTBE eats away and causes leaks in hoses, seals, and other fuel-system "elastomers," especially in older vehicles. What is your response?

A. The simple truth is that MTBE is one of the most common gasoline additives in the United States -- it is not unique to California cleaner-burning gasoline. The overwhelming consensus of experts in the automotive and fuels industry is that MTBE does not damage fuel-system parts.

KGO-TV reported correctly that materials used in newer vehicles, such as fluoroelastomers, are more resistant to MTBE than nitrile materials, which were used in the 1980s. However, hoses, seals and other nitrile-based materials in good condition will not fail or leak simply because they are exposed to MTBE in gasoline. These materials will perform adequately with cleaner-burning gasoline. The use of gasoline containing MTBE will not affect vehicle manufacturers' warranties.

Q. How do I know when my fuel-system parts need to be replaced?

A. Do what vehicle owners should always do: Follow the maintenance schedule recommended by your vehicle's manufacturer. During periodic inspections, your mechanic should inspect fuel-system components and replace those that appear to be aging. There is nothing new about this -- periodic automotive maintenance was just as important in 1906 as it is in 1996. You should also periodically check your own hoses to see if they have become hard or brittle. This will occur over time regardless of the type of gasoline used.

Inadequate vehicle maintenance, not the continuing development of improved automotive materials and fuels, increases the potential for vehicle problems.

Q. Who else says MTBE won't harm my vehicle?

A. These two authorities are representative of many in the oil and automotive industries: Respected fuels expert Robert Reynolds, principal author of the widely circulated "Changes In Gasoline" manual for automotive services technicians, says in the manual's 1996 edition: "In general, 1980 and later model years should not experience problems with ... gasoline containing MTBE." Reynolds simply advises that "technicians who find themselves replacing parts on pre-1980 vehicles" should use fluoroelastomers or other newer materials. (KGO-TV has interviewed Reynolds via telephone but to date has not cited him in any of its news broadcasts.)

Dr. Gerald Barnes, fuels specialist for General Motors Corp., oversaw GM's independent laboratory testing of the effects of California cleaner-burning gasoline on elastomers. Dr. Barnes said: "The results of our bench tests of fuel system materials do not indicate a cause for concern. We believe that the plastics and elastomers used in vehicle-fuel systems will not be adversely affected by cleaner-burning gasoline. This conclusion is supported by our vehicle and emissions warranties, which are not affected by the use of cleaner-burning gasoline. Our owners manuals also have recommended the use of cleaner-burning gasolines, for the air-quality benefits they provide."

Q. What else has KGO-TV not reported about MTBE?

A. 1. The Air Resources Board does not require the use of MTBE in California gasoline. However, most refiners choose to use MTBE as an oxygenate (an oxygen-bearing compound that helps the gasoline burn more completely) to help them meet federal and state requirements for oxygen in gasoline. MTBE helps reduce emissions of carbon monoxide and smog-forming pollutants.

2. MTBE is not new -- it has been used in gasoline since 1979. The oil industry used MTBE throughout the 1980s as an octane booster. In 1988, the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency approved the use of MTBE in gasoline at levels higher than in current California gasoline. U.S. EPA reviewed technical literature concerning MTBE's effect on fuel-system parts before making its decision. Beginning in November 1992, most California gasoline in wintertime months contained MTBE at current levels to meet federally required oxygen levels. Most Southern California gasoline since October 1994 has contained

MTBE at current levels in accordance with federal oxygenate requirements. There is no indication that car fires or related fuel-system problems have increased in California since 1992.

3. MTBE is used as an oxygenate in gasoline in the Northeast states and other regions of the country. The MTBE content in gasoline in many of these other states is higher than in California. There have been no widespread problems involving car fires or fuel-system breakdowns associated with MTBE use in these other states.

4. Nissan has cited MTBE as one of several reasons for an elevated rate of car fires in some of the company's 1984-89 vehicles. But KGO-TV did not report that the geographical distribution of Nissan's car fires showed no correlation with regions of the country where MTBE was used, according to the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration. The agency also observed no similar patterns of fuel leakages with other makes of vehicles. Regardless of who is right, Nissan is pursuing a voluntary campaign to replace fuel-system parts in vehicles with suspected problems at no cost to vehicle owners. Nissan supports the use of California cleaner-burning gasoline and even performed its own independent study that found that cleaner-burning gasoline does not cause increases in engine deposits.

5. BMW has confirmed that it is voluntarily replacing fuel hoses in certain BMW models with equipment that is more resistant to engine heat and gasoline oxygenates. (The replacement is free of charge to vehicle owners.) However, KGO-TV did not report that this national recall began in July 1994, approximately 21 months before cleaner-burning gasoline was introduced in California. As stated earlier, U.S. EPA certified the use of MTBE at current levels in 1988, and use of MTBE as an oxygenate has been common in many states, including California, since 1992. BMW supports the use of oxygenated gasoline.

6. On Sept. 12, KGO-TV reported the "finding that the new gas breaks down nitrile rubber parts is confirmed by the Society of Automotive Engineers, rubber manufacturers DuPont and 3M, as well as Zeon Chemical, one of the largest nitrile makers in the country." That sounded implausible to us, so we checked with the four organizations. All four organizations told us they have NOT said that California gasoline containing MTBE adversely affects nitrile rubber parts.

DuPont and 3M say they do not produce nitrile-rubber automotive parts and are not in a position to discuss their performance. Zeon Chemical says nitrile rubber showed no abnormal degradation in the company's tests with gasoline containing MTBE. The Society of Automotive Engineers (SAE) has not done its own research on the matter and has no official position. However, SAE publishes technical papers by individual researchers without taking its own position on the researcher's findings. One SAE-published 1988 paper stated the conclusion of its four authors that gasoline blends with MTBE "are compatible with materials found in gasoline distribution facilities and vehicle fuel systems."

Myth #3: MAKING THE GRADE -- THE MYTH OF THE FLAWED TEST PROGRAM

Q. According to KGO-TV, the Air Resources Board's own test program found that cleaner-burning gasoline causes fuel seeps, which can then lead to leaks and fires. What's your response?

A. KGO-TV has reported that serious problems with cleaner-burning gasoline were overlooked during our 1995 test program. Such reporting is wrong and irresponsible. The Air Resources Board and the numerous petroleum and automotive experts who oversaw the test program agreed that cleaner-burning gasoline performed as well as conventional gasoline. These experts found no basis for concluding that cleaner-burning gasoline could increase the risk of vehicle damage.

KGO-TV consistently has reported incorrectly that the Air Resources Board alone conducted the test program. In reality, a state/industry panel called the "Performance Subcommittee" designed and oversaw the testing. To ensure that the testing was as complete and meaningful as possible, we specifically sought the involvement of experts from the petroleum and automotive industries. As a result of this team approach, there is a broad consensus throughout the oil and automotive industries that cleaner-burning gasoline matches the same high quality standards of previous gasolines.

Here is a partial list of organizations that had scientists and engineers on the Performance Subcommittee: Chevron, ARCO, Texaco, Unocal, Mobil, Shell, Exxon, Tosco, Chrysler, Ford, General Motors, Nissan, Honda, Toyota, Mitsubishi, Mercedes-Benz, DuPont, Outboard Marine Engineering, Mercury Marine, Motor & Equipment Manufacturers Assn., Portable Power Equipment Manufacturers Assn., Petroleum Equipment Institute, California Independent Oil Marketers Assn., and the National Assn. of Fleet Administrators.

In the six-month test program, 829 older and newer vehicles in eight private and government fleets throughout California drove more than 5 million miles on cleaner-burning gasoline. An additional 637 vehicles in those fleets operated on gasoline that was commercially available at the time and also were carefully monitored. Of the 829 test vehicles, 403 vehicles were from model years 1985-89. Of the remaining vehicles, 275 were post-1989 vehicles, 85 were model years 1981 to 1984, and 66 were pre-1981 vehicles.

The Performance Subcommittee found that cleaner-burning gasoline performed as well as conventional gasoline in terms of driveability, starting, idling, acceleration, power and safety. Furthermore, about 3 percent of both test and control vehicles experienced problems with fuel pumps, carburetors, fuel hoses and other components. Maintenance data for the fleets indicated that a 3 percent problem rate would be expected simply due to normal wear and tear. The similar problem rates of test and control vehicles also were a strong indication that cleaner-burning gasoline had no greater effect on fuel systems than conventional gasolines.

Q. But KGO-TV said the Air Resources Board staff "threw out" data showing that the gasoline caused seeps in test vehicles.

A. Absolutely no test data was ever "thrown out". We presented all of the alleged "thrown out" data to KGO-TV upon its request.

A "seep" is a wet spot, wetness or stain near an engine gasket, seal or fitting. Wetness could indicate that fuel may have "seeped" from those areas, or it could have been caused by motor oil, engine coolant, power-steering fluid or other fluids. Seeps are a fairly common occurrence and, in the absence of evidence of an ongoing fluid leak, are not the reason for repair or maintenance. A "seep" is differentiated from a "drip" or "leak" by the fact that no actual fuel is observed.

Early in the test program, we assigned 18 Air Resources Board inspectors to perform basic, under-the-hood inspections of test and control vehicles to look for signs of possible engine problems. Inspections early in the test program indicated that seeps possibly were present more frequently in test vehicles than control vehicles.

However, many of the seeps in the test and control vehicles were not observed in subsequent inspections. A seep would have to appear consistently to indicate a potential problem, such as a fuel leak. By the end of the test program, 5.8 percent of inspected test vehicles had developed seeps that were observed

consistently, compared to 5.4 percent of inspected control vehicles. The difference is not statistically meaningful.

The Performance Subcommittee assigned a special Task Group to further investigate whether the seeps could be related to cleaner-burning gasoline. The task group was headed by Dr. Loren Beard of Chrysler Corporation, a recognized expert in the field of automotive fuel systems. Also on the Task Group were Dr. Gerald Barnes of General Motors, Dr. Brian Rippon of Ford, and field representatives from General Motors' Service Technology Group. Task Force members inspected vehicles in the test and control fleets, and they also investigated seeps on similar vehicles in the Detroit area.

In a letter to our staff, Dr. Beard reported: "We conclude that the 'seeps' do not represent an abnormal condition. In particular, many of the seeps that were evaluated in the California fleets may not be fuel related at all. Some appeared to be motor oil, others possibly brake fluid or coolant....The Task Group recommends that the 'seeps' identified in both the conventional and (cleaner-burning gasoline) fueled fleets be considered 'not fuel related.'"

Q. But didn't KGO-TV interview Air Resources Board employees who expressed concern about the seeps?

A. Earlier this summer, KGO-TV interviewed three Air Resources Board inspectors. These inspectors expressed their own personal reservations about whether the seep issue had been adequately investigated. KGO-TV also conducted telephone interviews with Dr. Beard and Dr. Barnes, but KGO-TV's July 16 and 17 news reports concerning the seeps never identified them or mentioned the formation of the Task Group and its investigation of the seep issue.

KGO-TV viewers saw extensive interview footage of three staff-level inspectors expressing their personal opinions, but KGO-TV told its viewers absolutely nothing about the serious follow-up work by nationally recognized fuels experts that determined that cleaner-burning gasoline was not responsible for the seeps. KGO-TV was fully aware of the work performed by the Task Group.

Q. Doesn't Chevron admit that cleaner-burning gasoline damages vehicles?

A. It has been widely reported in the news media that Chevron has placed warnings on its gasoline pumps and in its informational literature. The highly publicized warnings state that cleaner-burning gasoline could damage fuel-system components in a very small number of older, high-mileage vehicles. Chevron posted a similar warning in 1995 concerning the federally regulated reformulated gasoline used at the time in Southern California and other parts of the nation.

Chevron conducted its own 1995 test in which six out of 118 test vehicles (using cleaner-burning gasoline) developed a fuel-system problem, compared to one of 117 control vehicles (using conventional gasoline). None of the problems were positively identified as being caused by fuel. Also, the rate of problems in Chevron's vehicles was within the range experienced by the Performance Subcommittee's test fleets, even though the Chevron vehicles were somewhat older on average than vehicles in the Performance Subcommittee's tests.

The Performance Subcommittee looked at Chevron's test results and then combined the results of the Chevron and Performance Subcommittee tests. The Subcommittee concluded that the data still demonstrated that vehicles using cleaner-burning gasoline had not experienced a significantly higher rate of fuel-system problems than vehicles using conventional gasoline.

Chevron fuel specialists served on the Performance Subcommittee and supported the Subcommittee's finding. Chevron also has strongly supported the use of cleaner-burning gasoline and has marketed its products without any hesitation. Chevron has publicly stated that, despite the warnings issued prior to its sale of cleaner-burning gasoline, evidence has not developed to suggest an increase in fuel-system problems beyond the historic rate.

Q. What else hasn't KGO-TV told us about the test program?

A. 1. In addition to General Motors, Ford and Holley Products Company conducted their own independent laboratory tests concerning the effect of cleaner-burning gasoline on automotive parts. All three studies found cleaner-burning gasoline had no greater effect than any other gasoline on fuel-system parts.

2. Nissan conducted an independent study and determined that cleaner-burning gasoline will not lead to increased engine deposits.

3. Harley-Davidson tested cleaner-burning gasoline in its motorcycles. Company manager Edward Michel said Harley-Davidson "found that it performs as well as the unleaded gasoline that is already in use."

4. Various equipment manufacturers and others tested cleaner-burning gasoline in boats, lawn and garden equipment (including lawn mowers), snowmobiles, agricultural equipment and industrial and construction equipment. Cleaner-burning gasoline performed as well as other gasolines.

Myth #4: GOING THE DISTANCE -- THE MYTH OF POOR FUEL ECONOMY

Q. Why does the Air Resources Board insist cleaner-burning gasoline only leads to a 1 to 3 percent reduction in fuel economy?

A. The relationship between fuel economy and a gasoline's "energy content" is well established. As the name implies, "energy content" relates to the amount of energy that is available to move the pistons inside the engine when the gasoline combusts. Measuring a gasoline's energy content is a fairly straightforward procedure.

Gasoline meeting the state's cleaner-burning specifications has an energy content of approximately 1 to 3 percent less than 1995 California gasoline. Therefore, California motorists on average experience a 1 to 3 percent decrease in fuel economy with cleaner-burning gasoline. Some vehicles may have slightly greater losses in fuel economy while others won't have any loss -- it depends on the vehicle's design and its condition. However, there is absolutely no scientific basis for attributing extreme changes in fuel economy to cleaner-burning gasoline.

Several fuel-economy tests have verified the 1 to 3 percent figure. The 1995 test program overseen by the Performance Subcommittee was not designed specifically to measure fuel economy, but accurate fuel-economy data nevertheless was obtained for 131 test vehicles that drove 900,000 miles on cleaner-burning gasoline. This is a substantial amount of data compared to most fuel-economy tests, which rarely involve more than a few dozen vehicles. The 131 test vehicles experienced about a 2.4 percent decrease in fuel economy with cleaner-burning gasoline. Independent tests performed by the Auto/Oil Air Quality Improvement Research Program, an industry research group, also were consistent with the 1 to 3 percent figure.

Since the introduction of cleaner-burning gasoline in March 1996, the California State Automobile Association, the County of Alameda and other organizations have told the news media that their fleets

have experienced changes in fuel economy of 3 percent or less. More importantly, gasoline-consumption and "vehicle-miles-traveled" statistics compiled by the State of California do not indicate any substantial increases in gasoline usage in the last six months that would result from large decreases in fuel economy.

Q. So why do so many people say they are experiencing big losses in fuel economy?

A. Measuring fuel economy and establishing the cause of a change in fuel economy is surprisingly complicated. Vehicle owners who wish to do a serious analysis of their fuel economy need to consider a number of factors that can influence fuel economy to a far greater extent than gasoline. Here are some of these factors and the average reduction in fuel economy associated with them:

Factors That Affect Fuel Economy

Effect	Conditions	Fuel Economy Reduction (Average and Maximum)
Temperature	20 degrees vs. 77 degrees	5.3 percent; 13 percent
Traffic Congestion	20 vs. 27 mph ave. speed	10.6 percent; 15 percent
Highway speed	70 vs. 55 mph	N/A; 25 percent
Acceleration Rate	"Hard" vs. "Easy"	11.8 percent; 20 percent
Tire Pressure	15 psi vs. 26 psi	3.3 percent; 6 percent
Air Conditioning	Extreme Heat	21 percent; N/A
Defroster	Extreme Use	Same as A/C on some vehicles

Source: U.S. Environmental Protection Agency

AIR RESOURCES BOARD EDITORIAL

The late journalist H.L. Mencken once said: "For every complex problem there's a simple answer, and it's wrong." Sadly, KGO-TV (as well as most of the talk-show hosts on its sister radio stations) has succumbed to the temptation of crafting simple answers to the complex problems facing everyone who owns and maintains a motor vehicle.

Since May, KGO-TV has broadcast several dozen news stories on cleaner-burning gasoline that embraced bad science and bad journalism. It began with a fuel-economy test involving one car and two gallons of gas, and then moved to "revelations" about the 1995 cleaner-burning gasoline test program that appeared to come from our own publicly available reports. Then the KGO-TV "I-Team" zeroed in with a story about gasoline seeps that ignored the fuels experts who had investigated that issue. Finally, KGO-TV rushed to conclusions about car fires that go unsupported by firefighters, and they insist that a common gasoline additive damages engine parts despite a strong consensus of support for the additive throughout the petroleum and automotive industries.

The Air Resources Board has cooperated with KGO-TV during this period. We gave them boxloads of documents at their request, and we helped them download megabytes of data from our web site. We have responded to every one of their interview requests by making appropriate representatives available. And we will continue to do so. But, so far, it has not done any good.

Northern California print journalists have investigated KGO-TV's allegations and have found nothing to substantiate them. The San Jose Mercury-News and the Contra Costa Times have printed articles that contradict much of what KGO-TV has said. At least two other newspapers have looked into the matter and decided there is nothing to back up KGO-TV.

Because we are a government agency, the public and the news media hold us accountable for what we say and do. That's fine with us -- we wouldn't have it any other way. But, so far, KGO-TV has behaved as if it has no accountability for its irresponsible reporting on cleaner-burning gasoline. As of now, we will hold them accountable. "Clearing The Air" is our response to KGO-TV's erroneous news reports. We would prefer not to publish additional issues, but that is up to KGO-TV. If they continue to broadcast misleading news stories, we will respond with the facts. We welcome further scrutiny from KGO-TV, but we ask that it be factual and objective.

Owning a motor vehicle is not easy. Parts wear out and fail, sometimes without warning. Repairs can be expensive. Fuel economy can and does vary over time, often without a clear reason. Motor vehicle owners have always had these vexing problems. KGO-TV's efforts to propagate "simple" answers by bashing cleaner-burning gasoline and the Air Resources Board are irresponsible, a disservice to the public, and simply wrong. Mencken would understand.

For More Information

Call ARB's toll-free gasoline hot line at 800-922-7349. After business hours, please leave a message. News media should call ARB's Public Information Office at 916-322-2990.

Visit ARB's home page at <http://www.arb.ca.gov>. You'll find a copy of this report as well as [other documents](#) concerning cleaner-burning gasoline.

To share your thoughts with KGO-TV management, you can write them at: KGO-TV News, 900 Front Street, San Francisco, CA 94111-1450. Or, you can call KGO-TV at (415) 954-7777.