

Wheels: A letter from Jerry asks, “I read your column on E-85 and wondered if the engine can produce more power using E-85 compared to gasoline?”

Halderman: Using E-85 (85% ethanol; 15% gasoline) does result in a slight increase in engine power in vehicles designed to use E-85. While the heat energy of E-85 is lower than gasoline and results in lower fuel economy, the octane rating of E-85 is higher, allowing the engine computer to increase spark advance for more engine power. In the studies I have read, the amount of power increases about 5%. This means that if an engine produces 200 HP using gasoline, it will produce 210 HP using E-85. Will this be noticeable? Acceleration is likely to slightly improve, but I think the average driver will not notice any difference. Remember, do not use E-85 unless the vehicle is designated a “flex fuel” vehicle. Usually there is a sticker on the inside of the filler door that states what fuel should be used in the vehicle.

Wheels: Jerry also asks, “I am using SAE 15W-40 oil in my diesel truck. Is that OK?”

Halderman: Yes, SAE 15W-40 is the viscosity usually recommended for use in most diesel engines. However, be sure that this is the grade of oil specified for use in your particular diesel engine because it can vary according to make, year, and outside temperature.

