

Wheels: *Richard R. asks by e-mail: "I'll admit that I don't know a whole lot about E85. My friend's mom apparently accidentally put 1/2 tank of it in her 2003 Ford Focus and the local shop says she needs a lot of work for a lot of money to fix this. My suggestion was draining the fuel tank, replacing the fuel filter, and running a bottle of Techron. Is there much risk of any other damage? Injector O-rings perhaps?"*

Halderman: E85 is fuel that contains 85percent ethanol (ethyl alcohol) and 15 percent gasoline. This fuel should not be used in a vehicle that is not designated a "flex-fuel" vehicle. I do not think there is any chance of damage, but the fuel should be used up and replaced with gasoline as soon as possible. I suggest that the vehicle be driven on the highway to avoid idling as much as possible to use the fuel. Then add gasoline as often as possible to help reduce the percentage of alcohol in the fuel. All gasoline powered vehicles today are designed to operate on E10 (10 percent ethanol) without any harm and your friend's mom only put in a half a tank so it is closer to being about 40 percent instead of 85 percent. The main problem of using a high level of alcohol is drivability issues such as hard starting and rough engine operation. I checked with several automotive instructors from Southern Illinois University because they have a lot of experience with E85 in their part of the country. All told me that the vehicle will not be harmed if the fuel is used up as soon as possible. Over time, the E85 could absorb moisture from the air and start causing corrosion problems but this should not occur if the fuel is used up in a few days.

