

Published: 09.17.2005

## \$3-a-gallon gas sparks interest in alternatives fuels

**By Tim Ellis**

ARIZONA DAILY STAR

Ever since the price of gasoline hit \$3 per gallon, Colleen Crowninshield has scrambled to keep up with inquiries about alternative fuels.

"That was a wake-up call, when prices go up like that," said Crowninshield, the Clean Cities program manager for the Pima Association of Governments.

"I can't tell you how many e-mails and phone calls I've gotten lately from people asking about E85," she said, referring to the name of the fuel that is 85 percent ethanol and 15 percent gasoline.

The number of gas stations selling the ethanol blend doubled in July when a second station opened at 2075 W. Ruthrauff Road, on the city's Northwest Side.

Arizona Petroleum, at 1015 S. Cherry Ave., was the first station in Tucson - and Arizona - to offer E85, in December.

The fuel also is available in Oracle, but not yet in Phoenix, Crowninshield said.

Tucson is among the nation's leaders in advancing the use of alternative fuels, she said.

"We have access to every type of alternative fuel," she said, including:

- Biodiesel - a type of diesel made from non-petroleum substances, such as soybeans.
- Compressed natural gas.
- Propane.
- Electricity and electric-car recharging stations.

Officials in Seattle, one of the greenest American cities, has asked Crowninshield for help in establishing an E85 program, she said.

There are, however, many places in the country where E85 is not yet available.

For now, E85 is very appealing because it's cheaper than regular unleaded fuel, said David Cowley, an AAA Arizona spokesman.

That's largely because the federal government provides a 51-cents-per-gallon tax credit to ethanol retail outlets. "It's a nice tax credit - until 2008," when it is scheduled to expire, Cowley said.

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