

Alternative Fuel: Ethanol
Stakeholder: Car buyer

My name is Melissa Malin and I am thinking about buying a car that runs on E85. E85 is the term for motor fuel blends of up to 85% ethanol and just 15% gasoline. E85 is an alternative fuel as defined by the U.S. Department of Energy. The car I want could use E85 or regular gasoline in any combination in its normal fuel tank. There are no switches to flip, no mixing or blending. I like this car because government tests have shown that E85 vehicles reduce harmful hydrocarbon and benzene emissions when compared to vehicles running on gasoline. E85 can also reduce carbon dioxide (CO₂), a harmful greenhouse gas and a major contributor to global warming. Aside from all the benefits of purchasing this type of car, I have spoken with my mechanic and he says that because the technology is pretty new, there could be some problems that haven't been worked out yet. For example, ethanol has less energy content than gasoline. These new cars are not made to use E85, so they experience a 5% to 15% drop in fuel economy. I have read that the cost of these cars are about the same as gasoline cars and repairs shouldn't be much more, but I am worried. If I put my money into a brand new vehicle and five years from now they find out that ethanol is not a good fuel for some reason, I won't be happy. I am not sure what to do.