

Unleaded for older cars and two-wheelers is being phased out

The problem of finding fuel suitable for vehicles more than 10 years old and two-wheelers is getting serious. For the last year, the number of filling stations selling the ethanol-free SP98 has been falling steadily. It is rapidly being replaced on the forecourts by E10 which is 90% lead-free and 10% ethanol.

France was ahead of the rest of Europe in deciding, on January 26, 2009, on this change in the category of fuel available on the market. It seems that the government went too fast. Also, because of the incentive to buy new cars provided by the *prime à la*

cassee, fewer drivers are buying the old fuel.

Smaller filling stations cannot have too many different fuel tanks on their forecourts and are having to choose between dropping either SP98 or SP95, which contains 0% to 5% ethanol.

Nevertheless, 60% of all French-owned cars are more than 10 years old and their joints and valves will not stand up to the more powerful ethanol.

The situation is becoming worse now that supermarket petrol stations are changing over *en masse* to SP95 and E10. Many two-wheeler riders are



completely unaware that SP95 contains ethanol and have happily been filling up their scooters with it. Over time it will damage the engine.

With their usual deep concern for the consumer the petrol companies have issued no guidance to road-users.

Weathering the weather

For those who haven't already had their first heavy snowfall, it's well worthwhile running through a check-list of basic precautions.

If you don't have a garage, it's a good idea to buy covers for front and back windscreens. Anti-freeze is crucial and make sure you have a de-icer and WD40. Snow tyres or chains are important for mountain areas but for less arduous driving, Autosocks are quick and easy to fit. Keep a torch, blankets, water, boots, gloves, ice-scraper, shovel, first-aid kit and chocolate in the boot for emergencies and don't forget to keep your mobile phone fully-charged. Check the lights, windscreen wipers and tyres regularly. Ideally, don't drive in heavy snow unless absolutely necessary.



PHOTO SUE BARBER

Roof insulation is the best way of preventing heat loss but for those who don't have it, cardboard and blankets laid across the attic floor are a good temporary measure. Double-glazing is the next most effective but draught excluders, thick curtains and closed shutters will help keep the heat in. Curtain exterior doors too. Make sure you have a good stock of heating fuel.

To keep warm, exercise is best – if possible, go for a walk every day. When sitting, have rugs to throw over shoulders and knees. Thick socks and shoe insoles keep legs and feet cosy and fingerless gloves let you do certain jobs with warm hands. Several thin layers of clothing are warmer than one thick one.

Keep torches and a stock of candles handy in case of power cuts.

Air the rooms daily but shut bedroom windows at night. Extreme cold raises blood pressure.

A well-stocked larder is essential if you're likely to be snowed in and if you have animals, you'll need extra supplies for them too. Wild birds will be grateful for seed and grease-balls when the ground is frozen.

Updates

◆ Xmas hand-out for those on benefit

The Christmas bonus – *prime de Noël* – will be repeated this year, the Ministry for Solidarity announced last week. Started in 1998 for those on very small incomes, the eligibility criteria for 2010 will be the same as last year (see below). The amount depends on the number of people in each household and their combined resources. The base rate of the bonus last year was €152.45 for a single person.

Who is eligible? All those in receipt of:

- the Revenu de Solidarité Active (RSA), provided their household's income does not exceed a certain sum depending on the make-up of the household;
- the Allocation de Solidarité Spécifique (ASS);
- the Prime Forfaitaire Mensuelle de Reprise d'Activité;
- the Allocation Équivalent Retraite (AER).

According to who deals with your benefits, apply to your local Caisse d'Allocations Familiales (RSA), or the Pôle-Emploi (ASS, Prime Forfaitaire, AER) or the Mutualité Sociale Agricole, if you are affiliated there.

Successful applicants should receive the bonus at the end of December.

◆ Nome: consumer group fears electricity price hikes

The Assemblée nationale has passed a new law creating Nome, Nouvelle organisation du marché de l'électricité. According to the consumer organisation UFC-Que Choisir, "This law is automatically going to push prices up by 25% over five years." The Ministry of the Economy and Industry stated that the new law is not to fix prices but, by compelling EDF to sell a quarter of its nuclear-generated supply to its competitors GDF Suez, Poweo, Direct Energie and others, to keep electricity prices to users in France down to the cost of production. Without the law, says the ministry, prices would have risen in line with higher European prices.

◆ Rapid AIDS test open to all

The rapid HIV test, only available in cases of emergency, is now open to anyone who asks for it. Called Trod, it can be administered by a nurse, doctor or even a lay person in some cases. If the result is positive, a full biological HIV diagnosis is then carried out by a doctor. *FW*

Technically speaking with Marcus Williamson

What is WikiLeaks?

You've probably heard or read the name WikiLeaks in the news this week. So, what is it and why does it represent a perceived threat to governments and authorities worldwide?

As its name suggests, WikiLeaks is a service whose purpose is to 'leak' information which might otherwise be confidential. It encourages and facilitates whistleblowing, providing a means for those with a need to disclose information anonymously to do so. The 'Wiki' part of the name comes from the publishing technology being used and is not related to Wikipedia, the free, open encyclopedia system.

From there you can search for existing information or contribute new information by clicking on the button "Submissions".

Wikileaks also has specialised subsites, such as: <http://cablegate.wikileaks.org>, which will eventually contain up to 251,287 leaked United States embassy cables, from 1966 to 2010 and <http://warlogs.wikileaks.org> containing 75,000 previously confidential documents, relating to six years of war in Iraq.

WikiLeaks is relatively immune from prosecution because it is based in Sweden, whose 1949 Press Freedom Act provides strong protection for information sources. Beyond Scandinavia, the service then



has many 'mirror' servers worldwide, which hold secure copies of the WikiLeaks data.

People

The service was started in 2006 by Julian Assange, the Australian programmer, former hacker and activist, who is now its editor-in-chief. He was the researcher for the 1997 book 'Underground: Tales of Hacking, Madness and Obsession on the Electronic Frontier'. Assange currently lives in Iceland but spends much of his time on the road, presenting WikiLeaks and press freedom at conferences.

WikiLeaks has about 800 volunteers working around the world, maintaining its servers and evaluating new information as it comes in.

Email your technical questions to Marcus at: cointechno@french-week.com

Visiting and contributing

You can visit WikiLeaks at <http://wikileaks.org>

www. **PAUL-GEE** .com

AGA new 13 amp AGA from *9900€

*including installation on suitably prepared site

05 62 63 37 84
159 rue Victor Hugo 32000 AUCH

PISCINE-PLUS.COM

Swimming pool offer: 8m x 4m rectangular €14,500 ttc

*Celebrating 18 years of installing pools in France
*Order your 2011 pool at 2010 prices
*Free quotes

Tel +33 (0)5 65 37 79 64 - Fax: +33 (0)5 65 37 77 28
Email: sales@piscine-plus.com - Web: www.piscine-plus.com
7, Ave Georges Pompidou 46300 Gourdon

Angloinfo .com
DORDOGNE

How to make the difficult seem easy:

- ✓ Comprehensive directory of local English-speaking businesses
- ✓ Practical information on life in France
- ✓ Your local What's On guide
- ✓ Community discussions
- ✓ Free private classified ads for jobs, housing and much much more!

AngloINFO Dordogne: everything you need for your life in the Dordogne, Gironde & Lot-et-Garonne.

From the world's biggest supplier of information to the international community: expats, families, business owners... whoever you are, wherever you're from!

www.angloinfo.com