On Tuesday, February 26, 2013, the United States House of Representatives Committee on Science, Subcommittee on Environment held a hearing entitled “Mid-Level Ethanol Blends: Consumer and Technical Research Needs.” The hearing panel consisted of three witnesses, the American Automobile Association (AAA), the American Motorcyclist Association (AMA) and the Coordinating Research Council (CRG). Vice Chairman Chris Stewart (R-UT) chaired the hearing. Vice Chairman Stewart had this to say, “Unfortunately, the more E15 is studied, the more concerns are identified. Besides potential widespread impacts on vehicle engines, the EPA has led a haphazard transition to E-15 usage marked by regulatory confusion, bungled implementation, and a lack of consumer education.” The hearing covered a lot of ground but all panelists endorsed one common theme, the need for more research when it comes to using E-15 as a common fuel. All three witnesses also agreed that the environmental impact and cost savings are a wash when it comes to using E-15. The biggest problem with E-15 is the fact that it can harm the engine and the negative side effect of lowering the miles per gallon. In June 2011, Rep. Jim Sensenbrenner sent letters to 14 automobile manufacturers inquiring as to the relationship between vehicle damage resulting from the use of E-15 and vehicle warranties. All 14 companies responded with letters outlining their concerns with E-15 use and affirmed the potential for E-15 to negatively impact their vehicles and cause engine damage. Furthermore, the manufacturers indicated that their vehicle fleets were not designed to operate on E-15, and stated that the warranties would not cover damage resulting from E-15. As a motorcycle enthusiast for over 40 years who continues to do a lot of motorcycle touring, I’m very concerned about E-15 fuel.

According to my research there are 4 main problems with ethanol-blended gasoline:

**PROBLEM 1: DEBRIS IN FUEL**

Gums rapidly form in the fuel tank and fuel delivery systems as ethanol fuels age. However, ethanol is also a powerful solvent that will strip away and disperse this build up back into the fuel as large, performance-robbing particles. This leads to clogged filters, injectors and carburetors.

**PROBLEM 2: EXCESSIVE WATER IN THE FUEL AND PHASE SEPARATION**

Ethanol attracts moisture from the atmosphere, forming an ethanol/water solution mixed in the gasoline. Ethanol-blended fuel will naturally hold .5% water in suspension, but when water levels exceed this threshold, or when the fuel cools significantly, the water/ethanol mix drops out of suspension. This is phase separation. Excessive water in the fuel tank causes engines to run rough, stall, and can lead to internal damage to engine components. Ethanol provides a significant amount of the fuel’s octane, so when the ethanol/water solution separates and drops to the bottom of the tank, the remaining fuel is left without enough octane to properly operate the engine. Additionally, the ethanol/water solution can become partially combustible, which can lead to engine damage.

**PROBLEM 3: ETHANOL FUELS BREAK DOWN QUICKLY**

Over a short period of time ethanol fuel begins to break down. As ethanol and other components evaporate, the fuel loses octane and becomes “stale.” This causes hard starts, pinging and engine knock, which robs your engine of power and can cause damage.

**PROBLEM 4: ETHANOL CAUSES LOST POWER, PERFORMANCE AND DECREASED FUEL ECONOMY**

Ethanol fuel does not produce as much energy as traditional fuel. This results in inefficient combustion, decreased performance, reduced throttle response and poor fuel economy.

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I feel more testing needs to be done, especially including motorcycles, before this fuel is approved for public use. I’m interested in your opinion on this subject. Thanking you in advance.

Stump