How bad fuel can damage your car

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When fuel prices move upwards, motorists tend to search for cheaper options, forgetting the attendant dangers that come with such fuel.

Such dangers are known to those who care about their cars but some motorists choose to just ignore even when the effects starting being visible.

According to Mercy Namuyiga, a pump attendant at a petrol station in Najjanankumbi, there is nothing costly like substandard or bad fuel to a car.

"It is cheaper but costly in the longer term because it contains particles that clog the filter, which in the end affect the fuel pump," she says.

A spoilt fuel pump will set you behind by a few hundred thousand shillings.

Bad or substandard fuel is manifested in a number of ways.

However, our focus today will be on the damages caused and how you can tell when your car has been unknowingly refilled with it.

Bad fuel will cost you heavily. However, there are early signs if you have to fall prey at a refilling station. FILE PHOTO.

Engine sputter

Perhaps you have experienced a popping sound inside the engine of your car while driving at a relatively higher speed. This is the effect of bad fuel, which according to Namuyiga, blocks the stream, through which fuel is supplied to the engine.

The blockade, she says, forces the engine to lose pressure thereby causing the popping sound or the sputter, as it is referred to in mechanical speak.

Loss of power

In this case the car, will produce an unusual sound in addition to pops in between acceleration.

Such malfunction is commo during morning hours or at first start as the car produces a stalling soun before it smoothly accelerates.

The malfunction, according t Abdul Kizito, a mechanic in Industri Area in Namuwongo, starves the ca of proper flow of fuel thus affectin the fluid running of the engine.

Surging

Bad fuel has a negative impa on mainly the fuel filter as it par collapses its capacity to sufficien trap dust from circulating into t inner parts of the engine.

This in effect creates an unusu surge in power or self-accelerati with no input from the driver.

Engine failure

In the extreme case, Kizito says, engine will fail due to failure of fuel pump to supply enough fue the engine. This is not only danger but costly in the long run.

Engine hesitation

Bad fuel is hard work for the and because of this the en might experience hesitation du incomplete combustion.

The engine, according to Ki fails to completely burn some components, which in turn m the spark plug to misfire thus hesitation.

Hard-starting

When your car experie hardships in ignition, it is h possible that it is the resu improper flow of fuel.

A car's ignition, Namuyiga mainly depends on the stead continuous flow of fuel int engine, which in turn is burnt form of energy required for th functionality of the car.

Standards and fuel

All fuel stations in Uganda have a standard mark as an approval required by Uganda National Bureau of Standards.

The standard mark means that the fuel sold at such a petrol station is certified after it has been tested and retested at particular intervals.

This, however, does not guarantee that all certified fuel stations will provide quality fuel because, through connivance or well-planned schemes, good fuel will be compromised with dangerous additives.

According to Paul Kaganzi, the Shell fuel brand ambassador, many drivers never care to understand which fuel is sufficient for their cars even when most of these details are provided by the manufacturers.

"Petrol fuels are graded as regular low octane or premium high octane," he says, adding that before you choose to refuel your car you must understand which type of fuel is sufficient for it.

According to Frank Tukwasibwe, the commissioner of petroleum supplies in the Ministry of Energy, adulterated fuel is the product of a mixture between high quality fuel and low quality products, which brings about a change in the chemical properties.

This type of fuel, he says, present different dangers to the car engine and, in many cases, will lead to a breakdown of the car.

High cost of Uganda's fuel and market dynamics in the last 10 years

In 2007, a litre of petrol retailed at Shs1,950 with diesel costing about Shs1,690.

This was before they escalated sell at Shs3,550 and Shs3,300 pectively in 2011 at a time when ation rose to an all-time high of 25.7 cent.

rices of fuel have for long been a or of production and every time they rose it has had a negative impact e wider economy.

el prices feed into the prices of ent commodities, which in effect not only drives up inflation but affects the cost of business.

In the last 10 years, the price of fuel, especially petroleum, has rose by almost Shs2,000 at the current pump price of Shs3,950.

This implies that in the last 10 years, fuel prices have increased by about 49.3 per cent and have equally shared into the cost of doing business.

Early this month, pump prices started to move northwards peaking at almost Shs4,000 at the close of last week.

This was attributed to an acute shortage in the market resulting from ongoing repairs at the 40-year-old Kenya Pipeline Company the main supply route to mainland Kenya and much of East Africa.

The cause of the shortage might seem temporary but the most intriguing bit is fuel prices easily rise in case of market eventualities but the same is not reciprocated when the market stabilises.

For instance, in 2011 pump prices rapidly moved northwards with dealers citing the worsening rate of inflation which had peaked at 25.7 per cent.

However, when inflation reduced to single digit figures of 6.5 per cent in 2012, fuel prices only reduced by Shs50 moving to Shs3,500.

They have since been raising despite relative stability in the market in regard to inflation and the exchange rate regime.

A number of market dynamics feed into fuel prices key among which include the rate of the dollar, inflation, taxation and international market prices.

All these factors, apart from the dollar have dropped or remained stable over the years but the same has not happened with fuel prices.

For instance, in 2007 a barrel of crude oil averaged at $100 on the international market but has since fallen tremendously to a market average of $60.

The fall, notwithstanding other attendant factors have not shown muc impact on the local market despite the fact that it has been sustained for about five years now.