

Modifying driving habits will help environment

By JIM HOLLINGWORTH, M.D.
It's difficult to accept that one of my daily habits contributes to the greenhouse effect, acid rain, ozone depletion, urban smog and crop damage. Yet every time I drive my car, this is what is happening.



Canada, America, Europe and Japan. Of interest, these countries possess only 16 per cent of the world's population. As people in the Third World aspire to our standard of living and drive more cars, automobile-induced pollution will increase dramatically.

Irreplaceable, often prime agricultural land is taken over and paved so that we can drive our cars. In America, 60,000 square miles of land have been paved over in the lower 48 states - an area equivalent to the entire state of Georgia, in order to accommodate America's 138,000,000 cars.

In addition, 100 million lead automobile batteries are discarded annually throughout the world. Battery crushing stations release lead particles into the air. When inhaled or ingested, brain damage, learning disabilities and anemia may result. Children are particularly vulnerable.

The Hagersville fire reminds us of the problem of discarded tires.

If this litany has already encouraged you to buy a bicycle, form a car pool or to scrap the old gas guzzler for a fuel efficient, compact car, you will be helping to preserve our environment. If you are not yet convinced about reducing your dependency on the car, remember that 4,000 people were killed and another 270,000 injured in traffic accidents across Canada in 1989.

The known, useable oil reserves throughout the world are expected to deplete by the year 2040. You can bet that 2041 will be an excellent year to buy a

used Mercedes!

Oil is becoming harder to extract and the extracting process is inflicting greater damage on the environment. As the North American oil supply dwindles (the US is expected to run out of domestic supplies by 2020), more oil will be imported over greater distances. The recent Exxon-Valdez oil spill clearly illustrates the grave ecological dangers of transporting crude oil.

When Henry Ford invented the "Model T" he was providing basic transport. Over the years, cars have become status symbols and support items for damaged egos. We can help to reverse this trend by choosing small, basic cars which are fuel efficient.

Despite the arguments against the car, which has become such a basic part of our lives, I doubt if anyone will give it up voluntarily. However, we can make a significant contribution by modifying our driving habits.

We can: walk or bike for close errands, arrange car pools, use public transportation, take a job closer to home or move closer to work, lobby for improved public transportation (what a mistake to axe Via Rail), lobby the federal government to increase the fuel efficiency of engines and to promote research and development in alternative fuels such as alcohol and electricity, recycle motor oil, turn in the old battery when buying a new one, keep our cars well tuned, the tires properly inflated; avoid quick accelerations and decelerations and obey speed limits. When buying a new

car consider a model that gets good gas mileage (at least 35 km per gallon), doesn't have air conditioner unless you need it for medical reasons, and has radial tires with a high tread rating for longer use.

All of this reminds me of the other internal combustion engine that I own - the 135 horsepower outboard motor that is attached to my summer toy. Thank you to

all my knowing friends who asked good environmental questions about its polluting effects. You made me fully aware that I remain a part of your problem. Next year I am determined to do more canoeing!

Jim Hollingworth is a family physician and a contributing writer to The Medical Post on environmental issues. To contact him call (519)524-9911.

Environment Ontario issues Director's Order to Matachewan Consolidated Mines Ltd.

The Ontario Ministry of the Environment recently issued a Director's Order to Matachewan Consolidated Mines Ltd. under Section 16/17 of the Environmental Protection Act. The Order follows the discharge of 130,000 cubic metres of mine tailings from the company's property near Matachewan, into Davidson Creek and then into the Montreal River system on Oct. 17, 1990.

The Order requires that several studies be undertaken by the company, leading to remedial measures to prevent future discharges of tailings from Davidson Creek and its delta to the Montreal River. The remedial measures must be completed by April 1, 1991.

Other remedial measures include a study outlining short-term and potential long-term effects on aquatic life in Davidson Creek and the Montreal River. The study must be completed by November 1991, and indicate remedial measures that may be required of the company.

The company must provide a report indicating how the permanent portable water supplies of the municipalities and individual private supplies affected will be restored, or how alternate supplies will be provided. The Order also instructs the company to conduct routine water sampling of Davidson Creek and the Montreal River throughout the winter season. Sampling frequency will be increased during any winter thaw period and during the spring runoff period.

Residents and communities drawing water directly from the Montreal River are currently being supplied by the Ministry of the Environment with drinking water and filtration units to reduce turbidity.

"Further company discharges of tailings from Davidson Creek must be prevented, and it is absolutely essential to restore normal water supplies to affected communities and individuals as soon as possible," Environment Minister Ruth Grier said.

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