

Did You Know Your Vehicle Can Spark a Wildfire?

North Carolina, officials are reminding drivers that vehicles themselves can be a source of wildfire ignition - and that a few simple precautions can make a big difference.

A vehicle's catalytic converter and exhaust system can reach extremely high temperatures, hot enough to ignite dry grass, leaves and weeds. Catalytic converters, which help reduce emissions, can exceed 1,200 degrees Fahrenheit under certain conditions, including when running the air conditioner, towing a trailer or driving in mountainous terrain.

Wildfires can start when dry vegetation comes into contact with a hot exhaust system or when debris builds up underneath a vehicle. The risk is especially high during periods of drought, when vegetation is dry and more easily ignited.

- Officials encourage drivers to take the following steps to reduce wildfire risk:
- Check your vehicle after driving through dry grass or vegetation. Allow the exhaust system to cool before removing any debris that may have collected underneath.
 - Avoid parking in dry grass, weeds or vegetation. Choose pavement or other hard surfaces whenever possible.
 - Pay attention to warning lights. A malfunctioning catalytic converter can overheat and release hot particles capable of starting a fire. If a check engine or emissions light appears, have the vehicle inspected promptly.
 - Keep a fire extinguisher in your vehicle for emergencies.

Recent incidents highlight the danger. The County Line Fire in Avery County, which ignited earlier this week, was determined to have been caused by a vehicle's catalytic converter. As of April 24, the fire was 90 percent contained after burning 76 acres.

Officials say increased awareness and preventative steps can help reduce the number of human-caused wildfires and protect communities during high-risk conditions. For more wildfire prevention and risk reduction tips, visit ncforestservice.gov.

North Carolina Tourism Sets New Spending Record in 2025

North Carolina tourism reached another record-breaking year in 2025, with visitors spending more than \$37.2 billion across the state — proving once again that people really enjoy beaches, mountains, barbecue and sitting in traffic on Interstate 95 headed toward the coast.

Governor Josh Stein announced the new tourism milestone as part of National Travel and Tourism Week, held May 3-9. The 2025 total surpassed the previous record of \$36.7 billion set in 2024 and represented a 1.3 percent increase in visitor spending.

"North Carolina remains a great place to visit from our beautiful shore to our breathtaking mountains," Stein said. "Even in the face of challenges from Hurricane Helene recovery last year, we saw record visitor spending - proof that people want to be here and experience all our state has to offer."

State officials said tourism continues to play a major role in supporting jobs, small businesses and local economies across North Carolina.

According to preliminary figures released by Visit North Carolina and the Economic Development Partnership of North Carolina, the tourism-supported workforce increased slightly in 2025 to nearly 231,000 jobs statewide. Tourism payroll climbed 3.5 percent to \$9.8 billion. Officials also reported that visitor spending generated more than \$2.7 billion in state and local tax revenues, helping save North Carolina households an average of \$605 annually in taxes. Domestic travelers accounted for most of the spending, contributing a record \$36.1 billion during 2025. International visitors spent more than \$1.1 billion.

North Carolina currently ranks seventh nationally in domestic visitation behind California, Florida, Texas, New York, Pennsylvania and Georgia.

Tourism leaders said spending by visitors benefits all 100 North Carolina counties. "From our smallest towns to our largest cities, tourism means jobs for nearly 50,000 small businesses and our first-in-talent workforce," said Lee Lilley, North Carolina Commerce Secretary.

Officials highlighted several tourism initiatives launched during the past year, including the "Rediscover the Unforgettable" campaign encouraging travel to western North Carolina following Hurricane Helene.

Earlier this year, Governor Stein also visited several ski resorts to promote North Carolina's mountain tourism industry, which generates more than \$244 million annually and attracts more than 780,000 visitors each year.

According to the report, visitors now spend more than \$101 million per day in NC, generating approximately \$7.5 million daily in combined state and local tax revenues.

Researchers said the tourism study incorporates data from numerous federal, state and private sources to measure the economic impact of travel throughout North Carolina.

Additional information and full tourism reports are available at: visitnc.com/industry/research/economic-impact-studies.

Community Rallying Around Young Lupus Fighter "MJ"

Fundraiser plate sale is Saturday

Family, friends and community members are coming together later this month to support 12-year-old Elliott McNeil, affectionately known as "MJ," as he battles Lupus and Lupus nephritis.

A fundraiser plate sale, "MJ Lupus Fight Plate Sale," will be held this Saturday, May 30 beginning at 12 noon at Harvest Ministries Church and will continue until sold out.

Supporters can purchase hot dog plates, which include two hot dogs, chips and dessert for \$7, or fish plates featuring baked beans or slaw, dessert and a choice of water or soda for \$12.

Organizers say all proceeds from the event will go toward helping MJ and his family as he continues his fight against the disease.

The fundraiser also carries special meaning for the family as they remember MJ's late grandmother Virginia Teal who also battled Lupus and passed away at the young age of 31.

Loved ones say the community's encouragement and support mean the world to MJ and his family during this difficult journey.

"His fight is our fight," organizers shared, along with purple hearts symbolizing Lupus awareness and support for MJ.



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Church

MAY 25 - 29

Old Fashioned Holy Ghost Tent Revival Theme "Be Saved, Be Healed, Be Delivered and Be Made Whole." Hosted by Tabernacle of God Ministries, Dillon at 604 Camden Rd, Wadesboro, 7pm nightly. Worship, preaching & prayer services.

MAY 30

Rainbow Tea

At New Grove Missionary Baptist Church, 3pm.

JUNE 1 - 3

Women's Conference

At Lighthouse Ministries, 433 Whispering Pines Rd, Wadesboro, Themed "Go the Distance with God...All In." 10am each morning with Evangelist Becky Nance & Pastor Betty Wilson. Everyone is welcome. Info Pastor Gornie Williams 704-694-8198.

JUNE 1 - 5

Crusade

Conducted by Evangelistic Outreach Center at the Morven Ball Park, 6415 Robinson Bridge Rd, Morven. Mon-Prophet Jashawn Washington, Tue-Min. Malachi Tompson, Wed-Min. Chena Ingram Jackson, Thu-Prophet Desean Sibley, Fri-Min. Aaron Wesley, all at 7pm.

JUNE 6

Free Fish or Hot Dog Plates to the community.

"Fish & Loave" event at Rocky Mount AME Zion Church located in Ansonville, 12-3pm.

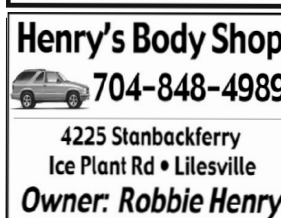
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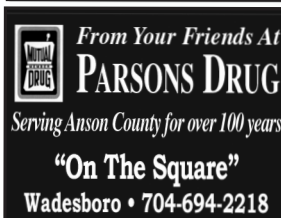
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JUNE 14 - 18

Vacation Bible School

At Freedom Baptist Church, 5964 Hwy 218, Peachland, 6-8:30pm each evening. The community is invited.

JUNE 24 - 26

Vacation Bible School

At New Grove Missionary Baptist Church, 6-8pm nightly

ONGOING

Sunday Schedule

3075 Episcopal Church, 308 East Wade Street in

Wadesboro, invites you to Sunday worship at 11am. Every 5th Sunday service is at All Souls' Episcopal Church on Main St in Ansonville.

Matthew 25:35

Kitchen

2nd & 4th Tuesdays every month. **Free hot meals**, fellowship & support 12-1:15pm at Divine Unity HORM Fellowship Hall, 3760 Hwy 109 S, Wadesboro. The community is invited.

Events

MAY 28

No May Meeting Of Anson Beekeepers.

JUNE 2

Board of Commissioners Meet 6pm in the Board

Room, Suite 209, in Government Center, 101 S Greene St in uptown Wadesboro. There are two regular monthly meetings, with the second June meeting on June 16 at 6pm. Meetings are available online at youtube.com, search for Anson Commissioners. To appear, sign up prior to meeting. Info 704-994-3201.

JUNE 11

Board of Education

Regular Meeting Closed Session begins 9am to discuss matters related to personnel & property pursuant to NCGS 143.318.11(a)(6) and NCGS 143.318.11(a)(5). Open Session begins at 9:30am. View at Anson County School's YouTube page. (*Search YouTube for Anson County Schools.*) Meeting takes place in Administrative Office Board Meeting Room, 320 Camden Rd in Wadesboro. For public comment, sign up in-person. Sign-up sheet will be available 30 minutes before the meeting.

JUNE 16

Board of Commissioners Meet 6pm in the Board Room, Suite 209, in Government

Center, 101 S Greene St in uptown Wadesboro. Meetings are available online at youtube.com, search for Anson Commissioners. To appear, sign up prior to meeting. Info 704-994-3201.

ONGOING EVENTS

Writers' Club Meets

Fourth Sunday each month at First Presbyterian Church in Wadesboro, 3pm (except July & Dec). Open to public, new members of all ages invited. Info 704-694-5211 or sandybruney@gmail.com.

You Decide: Is the U.S. Energy Independent?

The Iran war has caused a worldwide shortage of oil, which has been translated into a shortage of all types of fuel, including gasoline for vehicles and jet fuel for airplanes. The result has been significant increases in gasoline and other fuel prices. As this article was written in early May, since the conflict started, gas prices are up over 60% and airline tickets — which reflect the price of jet fuel — have increased an average of nearly 20%. Prices may be even higher once you read this article.

Yet, the U.S. is currently the largest producer of oil in the world. This has caused some to say the U.S. is energy independent, implying we can fulfill our fuel needs from domestic supplies with no reliance on foreign production. But, if this is correct, why have we seen the significant fuel price increases cited above?

One reason is that all oil is not the same. There are two fundamental types of oil, so-called "light oil" and "heavy oil." The U.S. produces a significant amount of light oil but our refineries built decades ago primarily were constructed to turn heavy oil into gasoline and other fuels. As a result, our country imports heavy oil from other countries.

A second problem is where the oil is produced and where the refineries are located in our country. U.S. oil wells are in the interior of the country and in Alaska, while refineries are typically on the U.S. coasts. It is often easier for imported oil to reach refineries using the ocean rather than to transport oil from U.S. wells over land to the refineries.

The third issue is the fact that oil is an international commodity sold and bought all around the world. In this kind of economic environment, the price of the commodity tends to be the same wherever the commodity is traded. Hence, if the standard price of oil is \$100 a barrel in the Middle East, it will also be \$100 in Europe, Asia, and the U.S.

With regards to local gas prices, a corollary question often asked is why gas prices can vary between stations. If oil is oil and gas is gas, wouldn't this mean gas prices should always be the same at all stations at any given time?

There are two answers to this question. First, stations will not necessarily purchase their gasoline supplies at the same time, which means the wholesale price of gasoline can be different for different stations. Those that purchased wholesale gasoline when prices were lower can afford to have a lower retail price for customers.

The second reason for different retail gas prices is the gas station's location. Stations that are at a convenient location, such as near a well-travelled highway, close to residential communities, or on the same side of the street where the majority of traffic is flowing, are more convenient and save time for customers. The stations likely will try to monetize this convenience by raising their price a bit. If customers value convenience more than the increase in price per gallon, then the local differences in prices will remain.

Ironically, light oil, which the U.S. has an abundance of, is preferred to heavy oil, which many of our refineries were built for. Hence, it appears a simple way for the U.S. to reduce its oil imports and move closer to energy independence would be to convert existing refineries from using heavy oil to using light oil. This would appear to be an easy fix, so why aren't we doing it?

A big reason is cost. To convert a refinery from using heavy oil to light oil would likely cost millions of dollars, and possibly close to \$1 billion. There are also potential local zoning restrictions, environmental worries and other regulations to address.

A potential solution to reaching energy independence is, of course, to reduce our use of oil, particularly for driving. Currently, 91% of U.S. vehicles use oil-based gasoline for fuel. There have been attempts to use other fuels, such as solar, hydrogen and electric-powered batteries created from alternative fuels. But so far there have been uncertain results from these efforts.

While our county is a big oil producer, we still must import foreign-generated oil, meaning we are not energy independent due to the type of oil our refineries must use. Is it important for us to be energy independent? Should we accept the costs and change the regulations so we can make our refineries compatible with the oil we produce? Or should we increase our efforts to use alternative fuels for driving? These are important questions that you, and everyone, must decide.

Mike Walden is a William Neal Reynolds Distinguished Professor Emeritus at North Carolina State University.