

How To Save Money On Fuel

Learn how to cut fuel costs to keep
your carrier business profitable



Introduction

As a carrier, you have lots of expenses. Not only do you need to consider tolls, parking, and accounting software fees, but you must also remember to purchase insurance and cover your annual license and registration fees. Plus, there are salaries to consider if you employ other drivers or back-office workers. On top of that, you have to worry about fuel.

In fact, fuel is the biggest and most variable cost for many truckers (it makes up [38% of a carrier's operating costs!](#)), meaning its price fluctuations can have a huge impact on your business and your bottom line. Unfortunately, fuel costs constantly change, making budgeting tricky. As a result, when we experience a spike in fuel costs, we usually see a wave of carrier bankruptcies as well.





In the summer of 2022, [the national average fuel price hit a record high](#) following the Russian invasion of Ukraine and the resulting crude oil sanctions. More recently, fuel costs have retreated from the \$5.81 price they reached in June of 2022, though they remain relatively high compared to the fuel prices between 2018 and 2021. As of May 1, 2023, the average U.S. retail diesel price was \$4.02. Still, there's plenty of room for prices to fall or rise from here.

Since the Strategic Petroleum Reserve is releasing one million barrels of oil daily for 180 days, fuel prices will likely drop by [10 to 35 cents per gallon](#). However, it's impossible to say for certain which way prices will go and how long they'll stay there. So, the best thing carriers can do to prepare for the future is to gain a 360-degree perspective on how fuel costs relate to every part of their business and concentrate on saving money, regardless of what's coming next.

How to save money on fuel

Fuel is an undeniably significant cost for carriers — and **fuel costs are high**. Fortunately, there is room for carriers to succeed in spite of this. As DAT expert Dean Croke says, “DAT has held the view that carriers, especially small ones, are in an excellent financial position to weather the storm due to record-high diesel prices and inflation driving up other operating costs.”

With a few simple changes, you could start saving money regardless of fuel prices.





Tips for Saving Money on Fuel

Change your driving habits to reduce fuel consumption

- Slow down
- Spend less time idling
- Reduce deadhead mileage
- Modify your truck

Maximize your earnings and cash flow with data

Get a good fuel card to save at the pump

Change your driving habits

This is probably common sense, but we'll say it anyway: the best way to save money on fuel is to use less of it! Of course, you can't stop using fuel altogether, but you can adjust your driving habits to use less of it. More specifically, you'll want to:

Slow down

Driving fast is a sure way to quickly burn through fuel — and money. According to the [American Truck Business Services \(ATBS\)](#), a driver going 70 mph will get 6.5 miles per gallon (driver A), while one at 60 mph will get 7.5 mpg (driver B). Sure, driver A will be ten miles closer to their destination than driver B, but they will have spent roughly \$15 more in that hour on fuel.

Now think about that over a year. If both drivers drove 110,000 miles that year, driver A would pay \$12,410 more in fuel costs than driver B. Over ten years that would be a difference of \$124,100 spent on fuel alone. Speeding means increased fuel consumption and potentially lower profit margins.

Spend less time idling

According to DAT expert Dean Croke, “The average truck burns around a gallon per hour when idling at 1,000 RPM. During a 10-hour break, a truck can burn through 10 gallons of fuel or \$57 at today's prices. Even by reducing engine RPMs to 650 when idling, fuel consumption drops by half to just 5 gallons for the 10-hour break. That reduction in engine RPM would reduce fuel costs by almost \$200 per week or just over \$8,000 per year.”

In short, idling can quickly add up, so shut off your engine if you know you'll be waiting somewhere for an extended period! Not only is it good for your wallet, but it's also better for the environment.

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Reduce deadhead mileage


Deadhead mileage, or miles driven without a load, generally occurs when returning to your home base or heading to the next destination to pick up cargo. Your truck will still use fuel during this time, but you might not be paid. If you are paid, you won't make as much money as you would if you had a load.

So, what does this mean? Reducing deadhead mileage can help offset high fuel costs — and DAT is ready to help. The [DAT load board](#) makes finding your next load faster and easier than ever. With millions of loads to choose from, you'll always be able to find freight that meets your needs. On average, DAT users have reduced their deadhead mileage by up to 50% thanks to tools like [TriHaul](#), a solution that suggests higher-paying triangular routes.

Plus, you can do everything on the go since the [DAT One mobile app](#) is included for free with DAT load board subscriptions. A combination of 15 apps in one, the DAT One mobile app helps you run your business efficiently. You'll be able to find and book loads before the competition, view fuel price information, plan and optimize trips, view the going market rates, find trustworthy partners, and get paid all through the same app! There's a reason we're carriers' first choice.

Modify your truck

This solution isn't for everyone, but the right truck modifications can significantly affect your fuel costs. Something as simple as nose cones or air tabs can reduce drag and cut fuel costs by up to [12%](#). After all, wind resistance is responsible for [65% of fuel consumption](#), so every bit of aerodynamic improvement helps!



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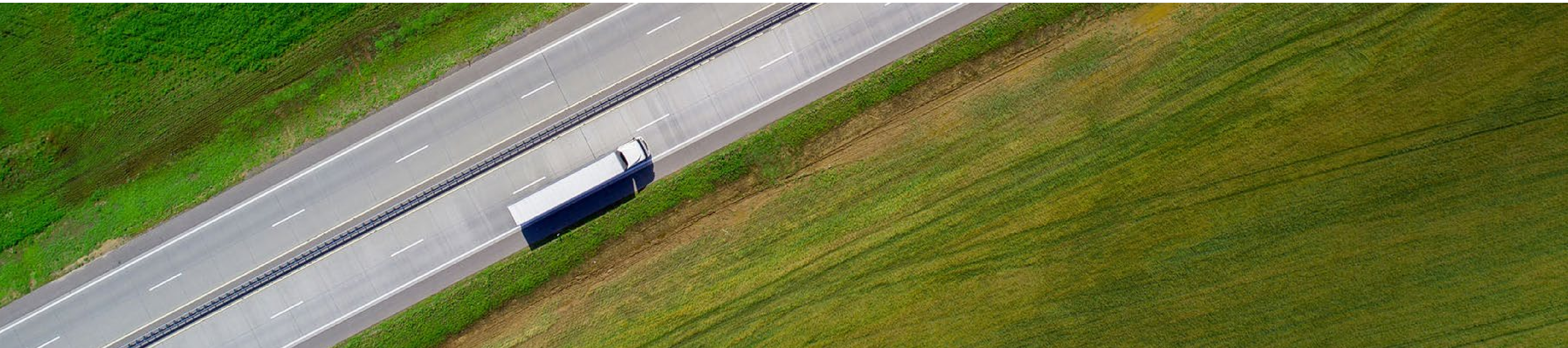
Maximize your earnings and cash flow

You can only save so much on fuel, so you'll also want to maximize your profits and ensure a smooth cash flow for your business more broadly to reduce the impact of high fuel prices. What exactly does this look like? You'll need access to the right tools and data to enter negotiations with confidence and secure rates that will more than compensate for the amount of money you spend on fuel.

With the DAT One load board on your side, you'll have access to the most current freight rate data for lanes across the country. With [RateView](#), you can see past, present, and future freight rates, enabling you to strategically select loads or negotiate better deals to improve your margins. [DAT Trendlines](#) can also provide insights into spot load volumes, spot rates, fuel prices, load-to-truck ratios, and freight rate predictions. Instead of leaving money on the table, you can negotiate for the rates you deserve, improve your profit margin, and build a successful business.

You can also post any available trucks and your rates on the DAT load board or using the DAT One mobile app to let brokers come to you. Plus you can [factor loads](#) through our partner, OTR Solutions so you can receive a cash advance to cover your fuel costs as you wait for your clients to pay.

It may also be worth looking into fuel surcharges. According to Dean Croke, "A fuel surcharge is a mechanism in the trucking industry that helps balance the fluctuations in fuel cost. [...] This surcharge allows owner-operators to offset the costs of high fuel prices, especially in times like these. In some cases, depending on fuel efficiency levels, owner-operators can make a profit from the fuel surcharge."



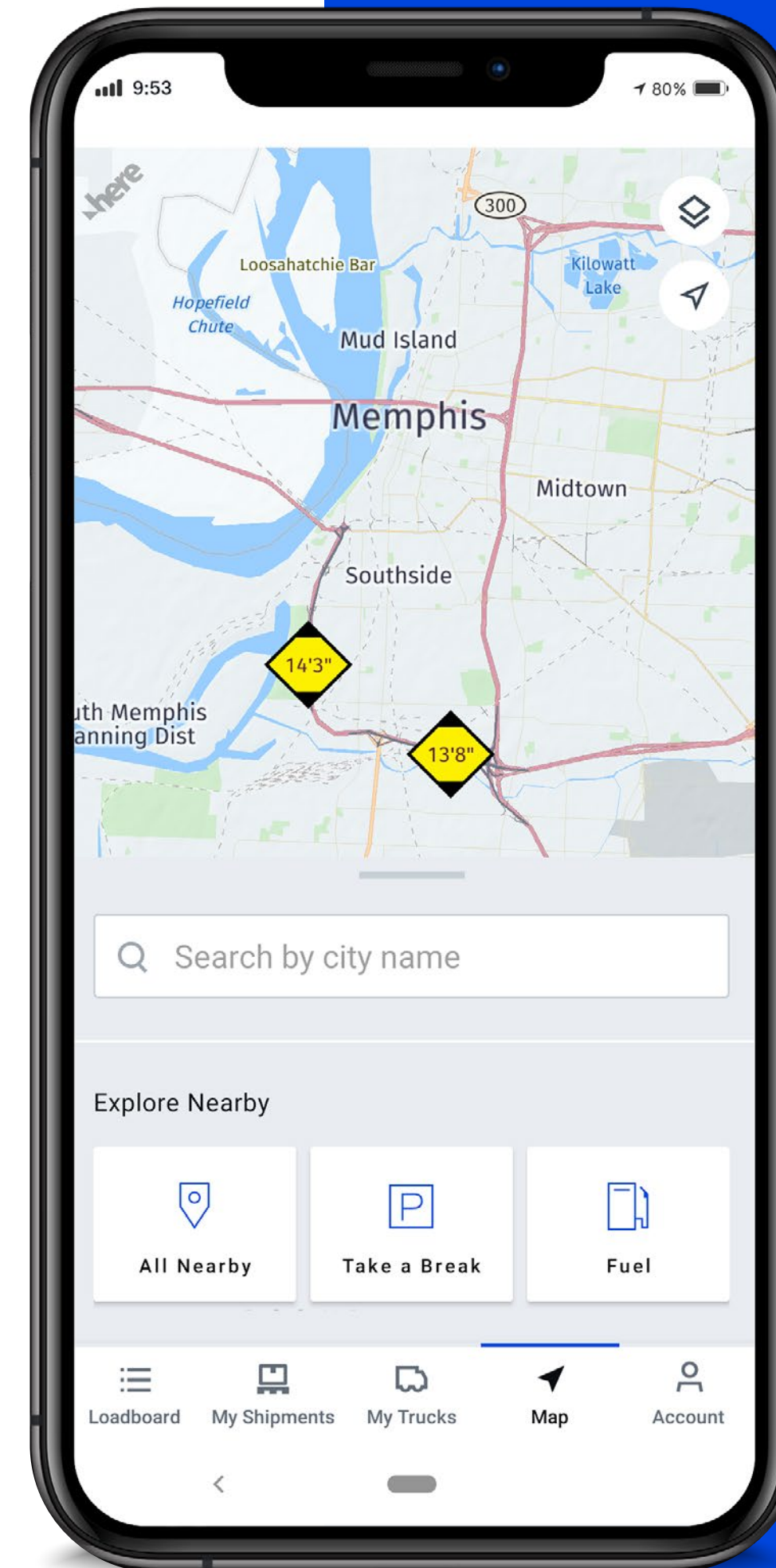
Get a good fuel card

A fuel card does more than save you money at the pump and provide a buffer against fuel price fluctuations. The best ones also provide additional cost savings on common carrier expenses. If you're looking for a quality fuel card, look no further than [the DAT WEX Fuel Card](#).

Accepted at over 12,000 locations across the country, the DAT WEX Fuel Card is an easy way to put money back in your pocket, even when faced with fluctuating fuel prices. With the DAT WEX Fuel Card, you can access exclusive discounts without paying any monthly charges. The card also has extremely low transaction fees and can provide additional deals on tires, parts, maintenance, oil, antifreeze, hotels, and other carrier expenses. There's even a cash advance option available for emergency repairs to get money when you need it.

Moreover, the DAT WEX Fuel Card can help you understand and optimize your fuel spend. Not only can you set purchase limits and employee spending controls, but you can also track fuel spending using reports from the EFS eManager or information from the EFS CardControl mobile app. Plus, the DAT One mobile app can be seamlessly integrated with your DAT fuel card, providing instant visibility into fuel prices and expenditures.

You can see fuel prices for locations — and the cheapest results in your search area will show up in green, allowing you to quickly find the best fuel deal. DAT One mobile app users have saved up to \$1,000 per month by comparing fuel prices and taking advantage of the app's various trip-planning resources. With [DAT One](#), locating parking, rest stops, hotels, scales, and new loads is a breeze!



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Cut costs and increase profits with DAT!

In this day and age, you need to do everything you can to save money on fuel — and that means turning to DAT. Not only can our solutions help you understand where your costs are coming from, but you can also use our accurate data to maximize your earnings and even take advantage of our fuel card partner programs to save money directly at the pump.

[Sign up for a DAT One subscription](#) today to see what DAT can do for your business!

