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Editorial

U.S. must get serious about alternative fuels

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The United States, as the most powerful country on earth, has never seemed to devote much time and effort into finding alternative energy sources. We continue to rely on oil to run our engines, factories, towns, vehicles and just about everything else. Now with crude oil prices approaching \$70 a barrel and the price of a gallon of gasoline nearing \$3, it's as if Americans suddenly have realized how dependent we are on foreign oil and how risky such a strategy has proven to be.

If people have to pay \$3 a gallon or more for gasoline, they'll have to find that money from some other source in their household budgets. It means higher ticket prices for airlines, higher costs for goods and services trucked to their destinations, higher home heating costs and cooling costs. The days of relatively cheap fuel costs appear over. Now what? Locally it could mean fewer people will come here to see our attractions and spend money.

There are flaws in just about every other way of generating energy, whether it's wind power, solar power, nuclear power, biodiesel fuels and hybrid automobiles. Either it costs too much to produce such energy or the new way of doing it is too unreliable. So we continue to buy gas-guzzling SUVs, over-cool our buildings and do little to get the world out of this looming crisis.

There is no reason to panic, but there is reason to be concerned if the United States doesn't do something quickly and start developing alternative fuels that work and producing vehicles that don't need so much gasoline. This is an effort that will take the resources and talents of everyone, from federal to state to local government and everybody who is served by them. It's going to take more than tax breaks for oil companies. Hybrid vehicles, the ones that combine gas and electric engines, must be made more efficient and less expensive. Research is needed to make all-electric vehicles better. We need serious studies and experimentation with alternative fuels. Americans must be more conscious of how much energy they waste.

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The world is not running out of oil, but the United States continues to import far too much of it from unstable countries that control the price and like the newfound profits. It's time to get serious with alternative fuels.

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