

POLICY

Biden to announce summer sales of 15 percent ethanol fuel blend

Announcement is part of the administration's response to energy market shocks following Russia's invasion of Ukraine



An ethanol plant in Milton, Wis. (Universal Images Group via Getty Images)

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<https://rollcall.com/2022/04/12/biden-to-announce-summer-sales-of-15-percent-ethanol-fuel-blend/>

President Joe Biden will say Tuesday that the EPA will allow the sale this summer of gasoline with a higher percentage of ethanol than other fuels, senior administration officials said.

Lawmakers of both parties from the Senate and House have pushed the Biden administration to waive restrictions on E15 fuel, which contains up to 15 percent ethanol, a biofuel derived from feedstocks like corn, sugar cane or grass.

The administration will make that announcement as part of its response to Russia's military invasion of Ukraine, a war that led to an oil price spike and churned global petroleum markets.

"He will announce that the administration is planning to allow E15 gasoline, gasoline with a higher percentage of biofuels, in place of petroleum-based fuel for continued use in the summer," an official told reporters Monday.

The Biden administration has made a flurry of decisions trying to lower gasoline prices following the invasion, including plans to sell 1 million gallons of crude oil from the U.S. Strategic Petroleum Reserve every day for 180 days and a separate 30 million-barrel sale, announced March 1.

Biden is scheduled to travel Tuesday to Menlo, Iowa, about 45 miles west of Des Moines, to visit an ethanol plant.

At a budget hearing last week, EPA Administrator Michael S. Regan, whose agency oversees the use of biofuels, said he had spoken recently with Agriculture Secretary Tom Vilsack about waiving restrictions on the sale of E15 fuel.

EPA restrictions prevent the sale of E15 fuel from June 1 through Sept. 15 in some parts of the U.S. because of its contribution to ground-level ozone pollution, or smog.

The agency will issue a "national emergency waiver" to allow the sale of E15 during that time frame "closer to June 1," an administration official said.

TIME NAME CLOSE TO JUNE 1, AN ADMINISTRATION OFFICIAL SAID.

Asked if the administration viewed the use of biofuels as a solution to the climate crisis, a separate official said they must be part of a long-term climate strategy for certain circumstances.

“For short- and medium-distance air travel, for example, we might be able to do that on a battery-electric or fuel cell basis, but for long-haul aviation, we're certainly going to need sustainable aviation fuels,” they said.

Members of Congress from the Midwest, where biofuels like ethanol receive bipartisan support, have pressed the administration following Russia’s attack to lift the restriction on E15 summer use.

A bipartisan group of Midwestern members wrote Biden on March 31 to allow the year-round sale of E15. "Because ethanol production involves U.S. farmers and processing plants located in rural communities, these benefits would be most directly felt in rural America," they wrote.

“What impact would biofuels have on helping us out here?” Sen. [Amy Klobuchar](#), D-Minn., asked Robert McCullough, an energy markets expert called as a witness for the Senate Commerce, Science and Transportation Committee hearing April 5.

“Traditionally the states with biofuels have the lowest gasoline prices,” McCullough said. “And certainly, the idea of using our own resources well is very attractive.”

Sen. [John Thune](#), R-S.D., also spoke last week in favor of allowing E15 to be sold year-round.

“If he were to announce that, that could, I think, have an immediate impact,” Thune said of Biden.

The White House said the EPA would work with states to ensure there are “no significant air quality impacts” during the summer because of E15 use.

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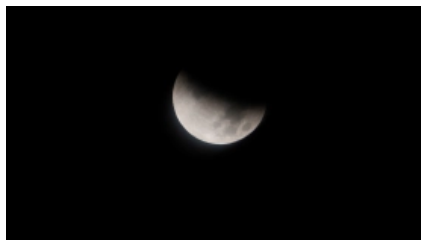
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