How effective are warning labels? Research over the years has generally shown these labels to be broadly ineffective - and it appears this is also true for consumers at the pump, according to a recent survey from the Outdoor Power Equipment Institute (OPEI).

Studies from the University of Indiana and the Association for Consumer Research (ACR) both concluded the efficacy of warning labels was indeterminate at best. The ACR research also added that "warning labels were not effective in influencing consumers' perceptions of hazards and risks." As the OPEI survey shows, this thinking can certainly be applied to the row of small stickers that adorn gas station pumps across the country.

The poll shows that 64 percent of respondents were unsure or did not pay attention to the type of fuel they were using. 51 percent also said they fill up their portable gas tank with the same fuel they use in their car, and only 24 percent said they checked the ethanol content of the fuel prior to filling up.

All of this is concerning to OPEI, whose President and CEO Kris Kiser said, "The research continues to prove that Americans are still unaware of the damage that can occur to their outdoor power equipment as a result of misfueling." The statement added that there are "100 million legacy outdoor power equipment products" in sheds and workshops throughout the U.S.

In addition, 60 percent of Americans assume that any gas sold at a gas station is safe for both cars and their power equipment. The OPEI poll statement then points out that it is illegal under federal law to use higher ethanol blends in outdoor power equipment.

How effective are warning labels? Research over the years has generally shown these labels to be broadly ineffective - and The message here is simple: from lawnmowers to leaf blowers, higher ethanol blends are not safe for the smaller engines. This is further proof that Congress needs to step in and repeal the broken ethanol mandate.

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