



## Will Gas Stations Survive?

A century ago, stables lined the roadways to provide oats or hay to people making extended journeys on horseback. Today, it's gas stations that line the highways to provide fuel for people on long car trips. But as vehicles powered by non-gas fuels are becoming more common, will gas stations go the way of the stable? In this video, explore why gas stations likely aren't going anywhere soon.

**0:00***Animation of early cars  
and gas stations.*

Hi, this is Alex from MinuteEarth. In the summer of 1888, Bertha Benz (yes, that Benz) became the first person to take an automobile on a long distance road trip. She also became the first person to have their car run out of fuel. If her steed were a horse, she'd have been able to stop at any of the stables that peppered the landscape to get oats or hay. But she needed car fuel, and the gas station hadn't yet been invented. Fortunately, pharmacies of the era sold a petroleum product called ligroin –a common stain remover that also happened to be the fuel source for Bertha's car– so she visited a pharmacy and was able to finish her journey. And as automobiles spread–in part due to the efforts of Bertha and her husband Karl Benz– pharmacies and other stores began selling ligroin and other petroleum-based fuels to car drivers in larger and larger quantities, and in the early 1900s, the world's first dedicated gasoline stations were built.

**0:56***Animation of modern gas  
stations.*

Today, gas stations pepper the landscape and make it possible for over a billion of us to drive our cars long distances with little fear of running out of fuel. And while horse stables still exist, they mostly support recreational riding and niche professions where horses are still really useful; in general, horse power has been replaced by "horsepower".

*Animation of electric cars  
and charging stations.*

But there's no reason for that horsepower to come only from cars burning fuel. There are automobiles powered by electric batteries, hydrogen fuel cells, and even compressed air. Among these non-gas alternatives, electric cars are the most dominant, with charging stations popping up all over. It's not hard to imagine that at some point in the near future, electric cars–or vehicles powered by a different fuel– take over, and gas stations go the way of the stable, with people only visiting them for recreational rides. But don't eulogize the gas station just yet.

**1:48***Animation of current and  
future usage of electric  
cars.*

Only 1 of every 200 cars on the road today is electric and 1 of every 40 new cars purchased is electric, although that rate is increasing. Given how rarely people buy cars, though, it's projected that it might take 20 years before even a quarter of the cars on the road are electric.

*Animation of conversion of  
gas stations.*

And when (or if) a full transition to non-petroleum fuels arrives, gas stations may still be at the center of it all. A hundred years ago, lots of stables ended up getting converted into dealerships and repair shops for the new type of carriage. In the same way, our gas stations may simply get converted into stations for selling new types of fuel. In other words, the future of gas stations may be quite stable.



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