



Announcement/ Update

Tier 2 Study

In the Tier 2 Study, the Environmental Protection Agency examines whether it is appropriate to require more stringent emission standards for new passenger cars and light duty trucks, which make up the majority of motor vehicles on the road. This study is the first step in determining if more stringent vehicle standards are needed to meet the National Ambient Air Quality Standards. In this examination, EPA assesses the air quality need, technical feasibility and cost effectiveness of more stringent standards. EPA is not making determinations now. The study includes a presentation and discussion of evidence that will support a determination by the Agency on future regulatory actions.

Background

The Clean Air Act Amendments of 1990 set specific exhaust emission standards, beginning with the 1994 model year, for light duty vehicles (LDVs), or passenger cars, and light duty trucks (LDTs), which include sport utility vehicles, minivans and pick-up trucks. These are “Tier 1 standards.” The Act requires EPA to study whether further reductions in emissions from these vehicles should be required—“Tier 2 standards”—which could not take effect before the 2004 model year.

Summary of the Tier 2 Study

EPA must address the need for further reductions in motor vehicle emissions to attain and maintain the National Ambient Air Quality Standards, including, at a minimum, three factors:

Air quality need for more stringent standards: The study includes evidence that supports the need for emission reductions beyond those provided by the Tier 1 standards. Motor vehicle emissions will remain a significant contributor to air pollution in many areas of the country. This assessment includes the finding that, in the time frame contemplated for potential Tier 2 standards, there will be an air quality need for emission reductions to aid in meeting and maintaining the NAAQS for both ozone and particulate matter.

Availability of technology to implement more stringent standards: The study includes an examination of the technological feasibility of controlling light duty vehicle and light duty truck emissions beyond the level of control provided for by Tier 1 emission standards. Evidence is presented that more stringent LDV and LDT emission standards are technologically feasible.

Cost effectiveness of more stringent motor vehicle standards: The technology projected to be available for the 2004 model year and beyond appears to be comparable or more cost effective than many alternative means of emissions reductions.

Issues Related to Potential Tier 2 Standards

There are several issues that EPA will take into account when considering more stringent emission standards for cars and light duty trucks:

Appropriateness of different standards for cars and light duty trucks: Sport utility vehicles and light pick-up trucks are an increasingly larger portion of passenger vehicles and a growing portion of emissions from vehicles. EPA will consider whether these heavier vehicles, which are often used for personal transportation, should have the same emission standards as passenger cars.

Sulfur in Gasoline: Sulfur in gasoline inhibits the performance of the catalyst on advanced technology vehicles and has other negative affects that increase emissions of HC, CO and NOx. EPA is issuing a separate staff paper that discusses latest information on sulfur impacts on vehicle emission controls and summarizes various approaches to controlling sulfur levels in gasoline. A workshop to discuss these issues will be held on May 12.

Uniform Fuel Standards: EPA will consider the application of the same emission standards to vehicles regardless of what fuel is utilized.

Future Standards: Both the National Low Emission Vehicle Program (NLEV) and California's proposed second phase of LEV standards set a benchmark for future vehicle emission controls. EPA will examine these standards to understand their relationship to potential Federal Tier 2 standards.

Completion of the Tier 2 Report to Congress and Tier 2 Standards

The draft Tier 2 Study is being released now to allow for a 45-day public comment period. Tier 2 Report to Congress will be issued by July 31, 1998, under a draft agreement with the Sierra Club.

Following submission of this Report to Congress, EPA will, through the rulemaking process, determine whether: 1) there is an air quality need for further emission reductions; 2) the technology for meeting more stringent emissions standards will be available; 3) obtaining further reductions in emissions from light duty vehicles and light duty trucks will be needed and cost effective. If these conditions exist, EPA plans to promulgate a final rule by December 1999.

For More Information

A copy of the draft Tier 2 Study and related information are available electronically from the EPA Internet server at:

<http://www.epa.gov/OMSWWW/tr2home.htm>

For further information on the draft Tier 2 Study, please contact Karl Simon at:

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