



Announcement / Update

EPA Releases Tier 2 Report to Congress

In the Tier 2 Report to Congress, 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 report is the first step in determining if more stringent vehicle standards are needed to meet the National Ambient Air Quality Standards (NAAQS). 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 Report includes a presentation and discussion of evidence that will support the Agency's determination 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 known as "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 Report to Congress

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 Report 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 in the next 12 years. 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 Report examines the technological feasibility of controlling LDV and LDT 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:

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 hydrocarbons, carbon monoxide, oxides of nitrogen, and particulate matter. The emissions reductions needed from advanced technology cars and LDTs cannot be achieved unless the sulfur level in gasoline is also adjusted. EPA will likely address this issue in a proposed rulemaking at the same time the Agency would propose Tier 2 standards.

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.

Gasoline/Diesel Emission 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 benchmarks for future vehicle emission controls. EPA will examine these standards to understand their relationship to potential Federal Tier 2 standards.

Next Steps

Issues raised in the Report will become part of a rulemaking in which EPA will likely propose new emissions standards and reduced levels of sulfur in gasoline. The proposal is expected by the end of 1998, and the final rule by the end of 1999.

For More Information

The Tier 2 Report to Congress and related information are available electronically from the EPA Internet server at:

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

For further information on Tier 2 standards, please contact Tad Wysor at (734) 214-4332 or write to:

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