



Focus

Motor Vehicle Emission Check Program

Changes to the Department of Ecology's Regulation

Background

The Department of Ecology (Ecology) is changing its regulation for the Emission Check Program. The Emission Check Program is required by federal law in areas that do not meet federal health-based standards for air pollution from motor vehicles. In Washington, it is in place in the urban areas of Clark, King, Pierce, Snohomish and Spokane counties. It helps reduce air pollution from motor vehicles by testing their exhaust emissions, identifying the most polluting vehicles, and requiring their repair. This is important because motor vehicles are Washington's largest source of air pollution, accounting for about 57 percent of air pollution statewide.

Proposed changes

Ecology's proposed changes to the Emission Check Program regulation will do the following:

- Revise and upgrade the emission testing procedures for diesel cars and light trucks (less than 8,501 pounds gross vehicle rating). Currently, all vehicles are given a snap-acceleration test that requires them to be momentarily operated at full throttle. Some vehicle owners have expressed concerns that this could cause engine damage. Diesel cars and light trucks will now be driven on a dynamometer when testing their emissions, rather than being operated at full throttle.
- Clarify in the rule that all emission tests are valid for at least 12 months. The Department of Licensing is responsible for notifying vehicle owners when emission checks are required. They have requested that this language be changed in order to simplify computer programs that check whether or not a vehicle has met its test requirement.
- Require automotive repair businesses that wish to be listed as Ecology-authorized businesses to have the tool needed to check on-board diagnostic systems of 1996 and newer vehicles.
- Remove obsolete language.

When will these changes take place?

Ecology will hold a public hearing in May 2002 to take comments on the proposed changes. A hearing notice will be published early in May to provide information on the time, date, and location of the hearing. After considering all of the comments received at the hearing, Ecology will make a decision on what the new rule language will be.

Ecology expects final rule language to be adopted by June 1 so that all changes can take place by July 1, 2002.

For more information

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