



# Focus on **Clean Car Standards**

From the Department of Ecology's Air Quality Program

The 2005 Washington State Legislature passed legislation adopting clean car standards for cars, light trucks and medium duty passenger vehicles (SUVs and passenger vans). Washington's law requires clean car standards only if Oregon adopts them as well. Since Oregon has adopted clean car standards, clean cars are required in Washington beginning with 2009 models.

## **What are clean car standards?**

There are two types of motor vehicle emission standards: federal standards and the usually stricter California clean car standards. The California clean car standards significantly reduce greenhouse gas emissions and other air pollution from cars and trucks.

The federal Clean Air Act allows states to adopt California clean car standards. In states that do not adopt the stricter standards, the federal standards apply. Twelve states besides Oregon and Washington have adopted clean car standards or are in the process of doing so. These 12 states are: Arizona, Connecticut, Florida, Maine, Maryland, Massachusetts, New Jersey, New Mexico, New York, Pennsylvania, Rhode Island, and Vermont. With California, Oregon and Washington, they account for more than one-third of the nation's new car market.

## **Why do we need stricter standards?**

Motor vehicles produce more than half of the air pollution in Washington. This pollution causes cancer, asthma, and other health problems. More than 50 percent of Washington's residents suffer from at least one medical condition that is made worse by air pollution. Death and illness related to air pollution cost Washington's economy at least \$500 million each year.

Motor vehicles also produce more than half of the greenhouse gas emissions in our state. Greenhouse gases cause global warming. Effects of global warming in Washington include reduced snow pack, low summer stream flows, more winter flooding, increased coastal erosion, reduced water supplies for people and agriculture, and further loss of salmon habitat.

## **Will "clean cars" be more expensive?**

Yes. Some clean cars will probably cost more initially; however, they will save several times that amount in lower fuel and maintenance costs over the life of a vehicle. In the long run, the increasing market for clean cars will help keep their price in line with other vehicles.

## **Will there be fewer new vehicles to choose from?**

No. In fact, clean car standards actually give new car buyers more choices, because they include advanced, super-low-emission vehicles that are only available in states with these standards. All makes and models, including SUVs, pickup trucks, and even Hummers, should continue to be available.

## **What about diesel vehicles?**

New federal emission standards that apply to 2007 and later model year diesel vehicles may temporarily reduce the number of available diesel vehicles. However, most diesel cars and light trucks should be available in all states by the 2009 model year, when the clean car standards go into effect in Washington. The clean car standards do not apply to heavy-duty trucks.

## **Will clean cars need to be emission tested?**

No. All 2009 and newer model year vehicles sold in Washington will never have to be emission tested. And, because of improving air quality, emission testing for all other vehicles will be phased out by 2020.

## **For more information**

Brett Rude  
Department of Ecology  
Air Quality Program

(360) 407-6847  
brud461@ecy.wa.gov

Bob Saunders  
Department of Ecology  
Air Quality Program

(360) 407-6888  
rsau461@ecy.wa.gov