

# Obama to unveil dramatic new auto emissions standards

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Station assistant helps a customer with an emissions test in San Francisco, California. President Barack Obama will open a new front in the battle against climate change on Tuesday, unveiling sweeping mileage and carbon dioxide gas emission requirements for US cars and light trucks.

A new front in the battle against climate change will open Tuesday, when President Barack Obama unveils sweeping new auto regulations described as equivalent to taking 177 million cars off the road.

The first-ever US nationwide standards to combat [greenhouse gases](#) pollution for automobiles will force struggling US automakers to dramatically boost the efficiency of cars and [light trucks](#) by 2016.

Covering mileage and carbon dioxide gas emission requirements for US cars and light trucks, they would begin to take effect in 2012.

The program, an administration official said, was projected to save 1.8 billion barrels of oil and achieve reductions of 900 million metric tonnes of [greenhouse gas emissions](#) -- the equivalent of closing 194 coal plants.

The announcement, greeted with delight by both environmental campaigners and industry officials -- albeit for different reasons -- will also coincide with an effort by the White House and Obama's Democratic allies in Congress to pass a landmark bill aimed at combating global warming.

"The administration is proposing tough new fuel economy standards and the first-ever greenhouse gas pollution standards for cars and trucks," the senior administration official said on condition of anonymity.

The official hailed the proposal, which will be codified in regulations between the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) and the Department of Transportation, as "historic."

New standards will push the fleet average fuel consumption for US vehicles to 35.5 miles per gallon by 2016 (15.44 kilometers per liter) -- four years sooner than is required by current US law.

Most passenger cars must reach 39 miles per gallon by 2016 and light trucks will be required to satisfy [fuel consumption](#) regulations of 30 miles per gallon.

For the latest 2009 models, the fleet average for US vehicles is 25 miles per gallon. Most cars currently are required to get 27.5 miles per gallon, while light trucks must reach 23.1 miles per gallon.

But cars will be more expensive because of the new regulations -- by up to 600 dollars per vehicle, above the 700 dollar price hike expected with the latest Corporate Average Fuel Economy (CAFE) rules already

passed by Congress.

However, drivers will likely be able to recoup the cost as they will have to buy less fuel, the official stated.

The regulations will end a legal battle over stringent standards imposed by California that have been challenged by the auto industry, and put an end to the current patchwork of state-by-state standards.

The new policy will give more certainty to struggling automakers like Ford, General Motors and Chrysler, which have been battered by the financial crisis and are working to refit vehicles by streamlining the regulatory process.

The US auto giants said the plans would provide a single nationwide efficiency standard they have sought.

"Energy security and climate change are national priorities that require federal leadership and the president's direction makes sense for the country and the industry," said new GM CEO Fritz Henderson, stressing that harmonizing the various regulatory standards "will benefit consumers across America."

Chrysler said that along with its alliance partner Fiat, it "will now be able to concentrate their resources on developing a nationwide fleet of clean, fuel-efficient vehicles."

Environmental campaigners reacted with delight to the tough new standards.

"Today's announcement is one of the most significant efforts undertaken by any president, ever, to end our addiction to oil and seriously slash our global warming emissions," said Sierra Club executive director Carl

Pope.

"The speed with which the Obama administration is moving to build the clean energy economy has been breathtaking."

California Senator Barbara Boxer, who chairs the Senate committee on Environment and Public Works, called the announcement "good news for all of us who have fought long and hard to reduce [global warming](#) pollution, create clean energy jobs and reduce our dangerous dependence on foreign oil."

Democratic Senator Carl Levin of Michigan, the historic home of the US automobile industry, welcomed the move as "the only fair way to regulate fuel economy and greenhouse gas emissions."

Tuesday's event, scheduled to be held in the White House Rose Garden, was expected to feature green campaigners, auto industry chiefs and California Governor Arnold Schwarzenegger, who has pushed efficiency reform.

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