

China says its car boom is ruining air quality

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Chinese motorists get out of their cars to check on a massive traffic jam on the outskirts of Beijing on October 2, 2010. China's booming car sales have had a devastating effect on the environment, the national environmental watchdog has warned in its first-ever report on pollution caused by vehicle emissions.

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About a third of 113 cities surveyed failed national air standards last year as the number of vehicles swelled to 170 million, up 9.3 percent on year and 25 times the number on the roads in 1980, the ministry of environmental protection said.

"All the problems are closely related to vehicle exhaust emissions," said the government report, which was published on Thursday.

Vehicle exhaust emissions exceeded 51 million tonnes in 2009, including more than 40 million tonnes of carbon monoxide, nearly five million tonnes of hydrocarbons and about six million tonnes of nitrogen oxide, the report said.

China's auto sales hit 13.64 million units in 2009, up 46 percent on-year, and are expected to rise by a further 25 percent this year to 17 million.

The ministry pledged to toughen supervision and control of vehicle exhaust emissions.

Projects are already under way in several cities to upgrade petrol stations, oil storage tanks and oil tankers to rein in [emissions](#), the report said.

China's latest Five-Year Plan, for 2011-2015, which was adopted last month, called on car makers to focus on researching and developing new energy vehicles, such as [electric cars](#) and hybrid vehicles.

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