

# New California rules require cleaner cars

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California, long a national leader in cutting auto pollution, pushed the envelope further Friday as state regulators approved rules to cut greenhouse gas emissions from cars and put significantly more pollution-free vehicles on the road in coming years.

The package of Air Resources Board regulations would require auto manufacturers to offer more zero- or very low-emission cars such as battery electric, [hydrogen fuel cell](#) and plug-in hybrid vehicles in California starting with model year 2018.

By 2025, one in seven new autos sold in California, or roughly 1.4 million, must be ultra-clean, moving what is now a driving novelty into the mainstream.

The rules also toughen all new-car standards for emissions that form smog and contribute to global warming.

"Today's vote ... represents a new chapter for clean cars in California and in the nation as a whole," said Air Resources Board Chairwoman Mary Nichols.

[Auto manufacturers](#) are uneasy with some of the provisions but generally support the package, which took three years to develop. "We know the board wants to push the automakers," said Mike Love, national regulatory affairs manager for [Toyota Motor](#) Sales. "We said we're willing to go along with you and do our best."

The requirements are expected to drive up car prices. The board staff predicts that the advanced technologies needed to meet the new standards will add \$1,900 to the price of a new car in 2025. But that would be more than offset by \$6,000 in estimated [fuel savings](#) over the life of the vehicle, according to the board's staff.

Zero-emission autos now make up a minuscule portion of the more than 26 million cars in California, with just a few hundred fuel cell cars and about 34,000 battery electric autos on the road.

"The fact that we are going to change what consumers can buy is one of the most important things we can do," board member Ken Yeager said before the panel, at the end of a two-day hearing in Los Angeles, voted 9-0 to approve the rules.

Manufacturers are poised to introduce a number of new electric and plug-in hybrid models. "This year, two dozen or more new vehicles are going to come out in the market," Love said. "Everyone is trying their idea for EVs (electric vehicles), plug-ins."

Nichols said she has seen "a real change in attitudes on the part of auto companies that have seen the handwriting on the wall. ... The reality is that companies see the future is going to be in electric drivetrain vehicles. They're moving there as fast they can."

But automakers do still have concerns, particularly whether consumers will buy the ultra-clean cars.

"Automakers are mandated to build products that consumers are not mandated to buy," said Gloria Bergquist, a spokeswoman for the Alliance of Automobile Manufacturers, which includes Chrysler Group, Ford Motor Co. and General Motors Co. "If the electric vehicle infrastructure is not in place, consumers may be reluctant to buy these

technologies."

Jack Nerad, Kelley Blue Book market analyst, predicted that "the added expense and lesser versatility of the 'environmental' vehicles" will continue to make them less desirable to consumers. Manufacturers might have to sell clean cars at a loss to meet the requirements, and "buyers of conventional cars will pick up the remainder of the tab," he said.

One of the most disputed elements of the rules centered on a clause that in the early years of the mandate gives credits to automakers who exceed the greenhouse gas emission standards by a certain amount. Those credits would reduce the number of electric, fuel cell and plug-in hybrids the companies had to offer in California.

Jay Friedland, legislative director of Plug In America, called it "a loophole you can drive a truck through" that will undermine the 2025 goal of having ultra-clean cars make up 15 percent of the new vehicles sold in the state.

A zero-emission mandate is not new in California. It dates from 1990 but was progressively watered down over the years.

The state's ambitious goals to slash its greenhouse gas production renewed focus on the role that super clean cars could play.

"The steady drumbeat of the need to get off the dependence on petroleum is really what is driving this," Nichols said. "It's taken longer than we've hoped."

Starting with model year 2015, automakers will have to meet tougher standards for smog-forming emissions and, in 2017, greater limits on pollutants that contribute to global warming.

By 2025, the standards are designed to reduce the average smog-forming emissions of new cars and light trucks by 75 percent compared with those sold today.

The [greenhouse gas](#) limits, which would be the same as the federal government has proposed for vehicles nationally, should cut those auto emissions by a third in 2025. To meet the new limits, the board staff anticipates the auto industry will make greater use of advanced hybrid technology, stronger and lighter materials and improved emission-control equipment.

If oil companies don't reach an agreement with the state to voluntarily install alternative fueling stations, such as for hydrogen fuel cells, the new rules will also require them to do so when a certain number of cars using that fuel is reached. The outlets could be placed at an existing gasoline station or a free-standing site.

"I hope the oil industry will get on board rather than dragging its feet," said board member Hector De La Torre.

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