

EPA proposes tougher fuel-efficiency standards for trucks

June 19 2015, by Matthew Daly



A truck heads eastbound on Rt 50 in Bowie, Md., Friday, June 19, 2015. The Obama administration on Friday proposed tougher mileage standards for medium and heavy-duty trucks, the latest move by President Barack Obama in his second-term drive to reduce pollution blamed for global warming. (AP Photo/Susan Walsh)

The Obama administration on Friday proposed tough new standards to

improve fuel efficiency and reduce carbon dioxide pollution from trucks and vans, the latest move by President Barack Obama to address global warming.

The new rules are designed to slash heat-trapping carbon emissions by 24 percent by 2027 while reducing oil consumption by up to 1.8 billion barrels over the lifetime of the vehicles sold under the rule.

Medium and heavy-duty vehicles account for about 20 percent of greenhouse gas emissions and oil use in the U.S. transportation sector, polluting the air and contributing to climate change. The trucks and vans comprise only 5 percent of vehicles on the road.

The proposal comes amid a flurry of recent actions by Obama on the environment, including a new federal rule regulating small streams and wetlands and a separate rule to restrict greenhouse gas emissions from airplanes.

The administration also is expected to move forward this summer on its plan to curb carbon pollution from coal-fired power plants, a rule Republicans in Congress have vowed to stop.

The long-expected trucks rule comes one day after Pope Francis issued a teaching document calling for the world to take action to slow climate change.

Transportation Secretary Anthony Foxx said the new rules would help the environment and the economy, as trucks use less fuel and shipping costs go down. Foxx called the rules "good news all around."

Gina McCarthy, chief of the Environmental Protection Agency, said the plan would deliver "big time" on Obama's call to cut carbon pollution.

"With emission reductions weighing in at 1 billion tons, this proposal will save consumers, businesses and truck owners money," McCarthy said. At the same time, the rules will "spur technology innovation and job-growth, while protecting Americans' health and our environment over the long haul," she said.



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Under the new rule, a best-in-class, long-haul truck carrying 68,000 pounds of cargo is expected to get at least 10 miles per gallon, up from a range of 5 to 7 miles per gallon today, the EPA said. Vehicle owners would recoup costs associated with the rule within two years because of reduced fuel consumption, officials said.

Partly because of those expected savings, the truck rule appeared to generate less controversy than some of the previous regulations the EPA has issued on climate change, although the industry was still reviewing the proposal.

The American Trucking Association said industry generally supports the new rules, but remains concerned that it may result in use of technologies on vehicles before they can be fully tested. Trucks carry goods from produce to timber and oil, as well as packages from major companies such as Amazon, on highways across the country.

"Fuel is an enormous expense for our industry - and carbon emissions carry an enormous cost for our planet," said ATA President and CEO Bill Graves. "That's why our industry supported the Obama administration's historic first round of greenhouse gas and fuel efficiency standards for medium and large trucks and why we support the aims of this second round of standards."

Still, Graves and other officials said truck and engine manufacturers need time to develop solutions to meet the new standards.

The proposed standards would cover model years 2021-2027 and apply to semi-trucks, large pickup trucks and vans, and all types and sizes of buses and work trucks, officials said.

The National Automobile Dealers Association and American Truck Dealers blasted the rule, saying it would add an average of nearly \$12,000 to the cost of a new truck.



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"Recent history has shown that mandates with underestimated compliance costs result in substantially higher prices for commercial vehicles, and force fleet owners and operators to seek out less-expensive and less fuel-efficient alternatives in the marketplace," the groups said in a statement.

The Owner-Operator Independent Drivers Association of Grain Valley, Missouri, which counts 150,000 members, said it was concerned that the rules would "push truckers to purchase technology that is not fully tested and may lead to costs such as increased maintenance and down time that will eclipse the potential savings estimated in the proposal."

Once completed, the rules are expected to lower carbon dioxide emissions by about 1 billion metric tons.

The rule builds on fuel efficiency and carbon pollution standards already in place for model years 2014-2018. Those rules are expected to reduce greenhouse gas emissions by 270 million metric tons and save vehicle owners more than \$50 billion in fuel costs, compared to previous standards.

Environmental groups cheered the new rule.

"Anyone who's ever been stuck behind a truck or bus knows how much they pollute," said Travis Madsen of Environment America, an advocacy group. "Making trucks go farther on a gallon of fuel can curb pollution, help save the planet and save money," he said.

The proposed rules will be open to public comment for at least two months and would be completed next year.

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Citation: EPA proposes tougher fuel-efficiency standards for trucks (2015, June 19) retrieved 25 April 2024 from <https://phys.org/news/2015-06-tougher-fuel-efficiency-standards-trucks.html>

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