

US average fuel economy at record high of 24.8 mpg

November 2 2016, by Dee-Ann Durbin



In this June 30, 2016 file photo, nozzles pump gas into vehicles at a BP gas station in Hoboken, N.J. Fuel economy is at a record high as new technology helps vehicles lose weight and drive more efficiently. The U.S. Environmental Protection Agency says the fuel economy of 2015 model-year vehicles increased 0.5 mile per gallon to 24.8 miles per gallon. (AP Photo/Julio Cortez)

U.S. vehicles are losing weight, and it's helping them use less fuel.

The U.S. Environmental Protection Agency said Wednesday that the average fuel economy of 2015 model-year vehicles increased 0.5 mile per gallon to a record high of 24.8 miles per gallon.

Mazda had the highest average fuel economy of 29.6 mpg, the EPA said. Fiat Chrysler had the lowest, at 20.8 mpg. Most manufacturers improved over 2014, but General Motors Co. and Toyota Motor Corp. both had lower fuel economy in 2015 because they produced more trucks.

Weight loss is one reason that fuel economy is increasing. Vehicles were an average of 25 pounds lighter in the 2015 model year than they were the year before, because automakers are increasingly using lighter materials like aluminum and high-strength steel. Vehicle weight is expected to drop another 50 pounds in 2016, the agency said.

Trucks saw the biggest weight declines in 2015, losing an average of 110 pounds, the EPA said. Ford Motor Co. released its aluminum-bodied F-150 pickup truck in the 2015 model year; it gets up to 22 mpg in city and highway driving. Car weights remained flat from the prior year.

Christopher Grundler, the Director of the Office of Transportation and Air Quality, said new engine and transmission technology also is making vehicles more efficient. Engines with gasoline direct injection—which waste less fuel than traditional engines—are expected to be used in half of new vehicles in the 2016 model year, up from just 3 percent in 2008. Mazda has the technology on nearly all of its cars. More efficient transmissions with seven or more gears are also getting more common; they'll be on 20 percent of 2016 model-year vehicles.

"The main conclusion of looking at this data is that the entire American fleet is getting cleaner every year," Grundler told The Associated Press. "Every part of that fleet, from pickup trucks to small sedans, is getting better."

But Daniel Becker of the Safe Climate Campaign, an environmental advocacy group, said the industry isn't improving as quickly as it should, in part because it keeps selling large SUVs. Becker said companies are allowed credits for things like ethanol-capable vehicles even though few drivers fill up with ethanol.

"Most of these gas guzzlers are built to carry cargo but often haul nothing more cumbersome than a latte from Starbucks," Becker said.

But Grundler says automakers are still on track to meet ambitious government standards requiring a fleet-wide average of 54.5 mpg by 2025.

The EPA included Volkswagen AG in the report issued Wednesday despite ongoing investigations of cheating on diesel vehicle mileage. Volkswagen has admitted that diesel vehicles from the 2009-2015 model years were programmed to operate more efficiently during fuel economy tests.

Volkswagen vehicles averaged 26.8 mpg in the 2015 model year, the agency said, but that could be revised if Volkswagen modifies the affected diesels. Volkswagen submitted plans in August to repair about 67,000 diesels from the 2015 model year, but the EPA hasn't yet approved those modifications.

© 2016 The Associated Press. All rights reserved.

Citation: US average fuel economy at record high of 24.8 mpg (2016, November 2) retrieved 27 April 2024 from <https://phys.org/news/2016-11-average-fuel-economy-high-mpg.html>

This document is subject to copyright. Apart from any fair dealing for the purpose of private study or research, no part may be reproduced without the written permission. The content is provided for information purposes only.