

Proposed Improvements to Washington's Clean Car Law

The problem

Motor vehicles are the largest source of Washington's greenhouse gas pollution. Washington cannot meet its greenhouse gas reduction requirements without reducing pollution from transportation. Washington has three strategies to decrease pollution from transportation: Cleaner cars, cleaner fuels, and moving people and goods more efficiently.

Motor vehicles are also the largest source of hazardous air pollution that harms our health. Reducing these harmful vehicle pollutants will improve public health and help us continue to meet federal air quality standards.

The solution

At Governor Inslee's direction, Ecology evaluated the current Clean Car program and recommends the following:

- Adopt Zero Emission Vehicle (ZEV) requirements in Washington. ZEVs give off much less toxic air pollutants and greenhouse gas pollution compared to standard petroleum-fueled vehicles.
- Include larger pickup trucks (up to 14,000 lbs) in the program. These vehicles are currently not covered under Washington's Clean Car Law.
- Change administrative requirements to streamline the program (such as removing a requirement that the governor sign Clean Car program rule changes).

About ZEVs

A ZEV is any vehicle that emits zero or nearly zero emissions while running. These include plug-in electric or hydrogen fuel cell vehicles.

ZEVs meet the same safety, quality, and warranty requirements as petroleum-fueled vehicles. ZEVs continue their clean operation as they get older, unlike conventional petroleum-fueled vehicles which typically produce more pollution as they age.

ZEVs cost more to buy than similar petroleum-fueled vehicles, but cost much less to operate and maintain.

WHY IT MATTERS

Washington faces serious economic and environmental disruption from the effects of greenhouse gas pollution. Greenhouse gases are causing climate change.

As a result, we are experiencing larger and more frequent wildfires. Our water supply will be impacted. Decreased snow packs will affect drinking water, agriculture, and wildlife.

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How a ZEV program works

ZEVs are part of the California Advanced Clean Cars program. The ZEV program requires automakers to:

- Deliver a certain number of zero emission vehicles to participating states each year.
- Earn a certain number of ZEV “credits” each year. The number of credits is determined by the number of vehicles produced and delivered for sale in participating states.

How a ZEV program would affect Washington

If a ZEV requirement is included in Washington’s law, Ecology would amend its regulations sometime between 2015 – 2017. Beginning with the 2018 or 2019 model year, more Zero Emission Vehicles would be available to buy in Washington.

A ZEV program in Washington would:

- **Reduce greenhouse gas pollution:** Adopting a ZEV program would reduce Washington’s greenhouse gases from passenger vehicles 10 percent by 2035. Washington cannot achieve its 2035 and 2050 greenhouse gas reduction requirements without decreasing pollution from transportation.
- **Improve public health:** ZEVs do not emit hazardous air pollutants. Less harmful pollutants means less exposure to toxic substances.
- **Increase consumer choice:** About 35 percent of ZEV models are not currently available in Washington. A ZEV program would require automakers to increase the percentage of ZEV models available for sale over time. While ZEVs are more expensive to buy, consumers could expect to recover the price difference within 2 – 3 years because of incentives, reduced fuel, and lower maintenance costs.
- **Improve economy:** Charging electric vehicles increases Washington’s energy use and sales. In contrast, money spent on petroleum-based fuels benefits distant economies.
- **Increase jobs:** Ecology’s economic analysis shows that Washington would experience a small increase in jobs by starting a ZEV program.
- **Improve energy security:** More vehicles powered with electricity or hydrogen helps insulate the region’s economy against petroleum price increases.