

NEWS



Manufacturers of Emission Controls Association

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Advanced Motor Vehicle Emission Control Technology Celebrates 25th Anniversary

Washington, DC -- The year 2000 marks the 25th anniversary of the introduction of advanced motor vehicle emission control technology – 1975 was the first full calendar year in which automobiles were offered for sale in the United States equipped with such advanced emission control technology as the catalytic converter (“catalyst”).

The United States motor vehicle emission control program has rightly earned the reputation as one of the world’s great environmental success stories. Today, emissions of harmful pollutants from new cars are a small fraction of those emitted from cars made in the 1960s, and lead, one of the most insidious pollutants, has been completely eliminated from gasoline. As a result, the ambient air we breathe is much cleaner than it was 30 years ago. Of equal importance, the strategies and technologies achieving these significant pollution reductions have contributed to a dramatic increase in fuel economy and allowed automakers to continue to provide high-performance vehicles to the driving public.

The centerpiece of this successful program is the advanced motor vehicle emission control technology that emerged in the 1970s and has continued to evolve to provide increasingly greater emission reductions. Key components of this technology are the catalytic converter, advanced ignition and fuel injection systems, on-board computers, and electronic controls. Indeed, since 1975, vehicles equipped with these advanced control systems have reduced pollution by over three billion tons worldwide.

Some noteworthy facts regarding the contributions of advanced emission control technology and its impact on air quality are shown below:

- Today's automobiles are meeting emission standards that have required reductions of up to 98+ percent for HC, 96 percent for CO, and 95 percent for NOx compared to the uncontrolled levels of automobiles sold in the 1960s.
- Despite the fact that fuel use increased approximately 50 percent and vehicle miles traveled nationwide increased by 150 percent between 1970 and 1998, CO, VOC, and NOx emissions from motor vehicles in 1998 decreased by over 44 million tons compared to 1970 levels.
- Beginning within the next five years, automobiles, light-trucks, passenger vans, and sport-utility vehicles (SUVs) equipped with advanced emission control technologies will begin to be introduced that will have emission reductions of 99+ percent compared to comparable vehicles without any controls in the 1960s.
- In the 1970s and 1980s, many predicted that stringent vehicle emissions standards would make automobiles prohibitively expensive, as well as decrease fuel economy, vehicle performance, and model selection. To the contrary, today's consumers can buy a wide variety of affordable, high-performance, lower-polluting vehicles.
- Fuel economy began a dramatic, continuous rise beginning with catalyst-equipped 1975 model year automobiles that had to meet much tighter emission requirements compared to previous model year vehicles. This was largely because the use of the catalyst to control emissions allowed manufacturers to design for efficiency. Technologies such as electronic engine controls, improved ignition systems, and improved fuel delivery systems also positively impacted fuel economy.
- Because the automotive catalyst can be poisoned by lead, the use of catalytic converters helped bring about the elimination of gasoline containing lead, which has been found to be a serious health hazard. Today lead from on-road vehicles accounts for less than 1 percent of the total national lead emissions, down from almost 82 percent in 1980.
- Nearly 500 million vehicles equipped with advanced emission controls, such as a catalytic converter, have been sold worldwide.
- In 2000, over 85 percent of new automobiles sold worldwide will be equipped with a catalytic converter.
- The Society of Automotive Engineers selected the catalytic converter, fuel injection, and electronic engine controls – all developed to reduce automotive exhaust emissions – as three of the automobile industry's ten greatest achievements over its first 100 years (1896-1996).

- Originally designed for gasoline-fueled automobiles, advanced emission control technology is now being equipped on vehicles operating on diesel, natural gas, ethanol, methanol, and propane, and in applications ranging from lawn and garden equipment to buses and heavy mining equipment.

“Advanced motor vehicle emission control technology is universally recognized as one of the great environmental technology success stories and has been a cornerstone in our Nation’s continuing efforts to clean up the air we breathe,” stated Bruce Bertelsen, executive director of the Manufacturers of Emission Controls Association (MECA).

On September 13, 2000, MECA will host a reception in the U.S. Capitol Building commemorating the 25th anniversary of the introduction of advanced motor vehicle emission control technology and honoring individuals and organizations who have made significant contributions to this Nation’s efforts to achieve clean air. The honorees include Senator John Chafee (in memoriam); Dr. Rodney D. Bagley, Corning Incorporated (retired); Edward N. Cole (in memoriam); Dr. Barry J. Cooper, Johnson Matthey, Inc.; Dr. Haren F. Gandhi, Ford Motor Company; John J. Mooney, Engelhard Corporation; Dr. Stephen Wallman, Volvo; the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency; and the California Air Resources Board.

Founded in 1976, MECA is a national association of companies that manufacture a variety of mobile source emission control equipment for automobiles, trucks, buses, and off-road vehicles and engines, as well as catalytic controls for select stationary sources. For more information on exhaust emission control technology, please visit MECA’s web site at www.meca.org.

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