

NEWS



Manufacturers of Emission Controls Association

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Advanced Motor Vehicle Emission Control Technology Celebrates 30th Anniversary

Washington, DC – The year 2005 marks the 30th 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 tens of billions of 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, light-trucks, passenger vans, and sport-utility vehicles (SUVs) equipped with U.S. EPA Tier 2-compliant or California Air Resources Board LEV II-compliant advanced emission control technologies have emission reductions of 99+ percent compared to comparable vehicles without any controls in the 1960s.
- 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.
- More than 500 million vehicles equipped with advanced emission control technology have been sold worldwide.
- 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).
- Researchers from Engelhard Corporation and Corning Incorporated were selected to receive the 2002 and 2003 National Medal of Technology, respectively, for their pioneering efforts in developing catalyst and ceramic substrate technology that were the technology base for automotive catalytic converters.
- 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 emission control technology is playing an increasingly significant role in reducing emissions from existing diesel engines through diesel retrofit programs in the U.S. and in countries around the world. Diesel retrofit technology, including diesel oxidation catalysts, diesel particulate filters, and closed crankcase filters, has been successfully applied to a variety of on-road and off-road diesel vehicles and 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. The decades of experience and success with reducing emissions from gasoline motor vehicles through the use of catalytic converters is now being transferred over to diesel engines to make ‘clean diesel’ engines a reality,” stated Dale McKinnon, executive director of the Manufacturers of Emission Controls Association (MECA).

On October 18, 2005, MECA hosted a reception in the U.S. Capitol Building commemorating the 30th anniversary of the introduction of advanced motor vehicle emission control technology and honored three individuals who have made significant contributions to this Nation’s efforts to achieve clean air. The honorees included: S. William Becker, Executive Director of the State and Territorial Air Pollution Program Administrators / Association of Local Air Pollution Control Officials (STAPPA/ALAPCO); Dr. Alan C. Lloyd, Secretary of the California Environmental Protection Agency and former Chair of the California Air Resources Board; and Michael P. Walsh, Technical Consultant on motor vehicle emission control and former director at the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency.

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 stationary internal combustion engines. For more information on exhaust emission control technology, please visit MECA’s web site at: www.meca.org.

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