

Automotive News

EPA says fuel economy of 2012 models sold in U.S. hit record 23.6 mpg



Based on preliminary figures, the EPA expects the fuel economy of 2013 new vehicles sold in the United States to increase to 24.0 mpg and for CO₂ emissions to drop to 370 grams per mile.

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Higher sales of vehicles with smaller engines, gasoline-electric hybrids and diesel powertrains helped boost the average fuel economy of 2012 new vehicles sold in the United States 1.2 mpg to 23.6 mpg, an all-time high, according to the EPA's Trends Report issued today.

The 1.2 mpg gain from 2011 models is the second-largest year-over-year gain in the past 30 years, the EPA said. Carbon dioxide emissions of 2012 new vehicles sold in the United States also dropped to an all-time low of 376 grams per mile driven, the agency said.

Preliminary figures for 2013 models show the EPA expects the fuel economy of 2013 new vehicles sold in the United States to increase to 24.0 mpg and for CO₂ emissions to drop to 370 grams per mile.

The agency bases its calculations on adjusted values that are close to the real-world fuel economy that most drivers attain instead of the laboratory figures derived for EPA fuel economy labels. The final 2013 model figures will be available early next year. In past years, the EPA's estimates have been very close to the final numbers.

Among the five full-line automakers -- General Motors, Ford Motor Co., Chrysler Group, which includes the Fiat brand, Toyota Motor Corp. and Nissan Motor Corp. -- Nissan is expected to topple Toyota to become the most fuel efficient automaker with a fleet that averages an estimated 25.3 mpg, up from 24.1 mpg for its 2012 models.

Toyota is projected to drop to second with an estimated fuel economy average of 25.2 mpg, down from 25.6 mpg for 2012 models. Among domestic automakers, Ford is expected to be the most fuel efficient with a fleet that averages an estimated 22.6 mpg, down from 22.8 mpg last year. The fuel economy of GM's 2013 light-vehicle lineup is estimated to be 22.0 mpg, up from 21.7 mpg last year. Chrysler is expected to make the biggest improvement in 2013, gaining 1.5 mpg to an estimated 21.6 mpg over 2012.

Among major brands, Mazda, Honda and Volkswagen are all expected to post an industry best 27.5 mpg in average fuel economy for 2013 models.

In a statement today, Dan Becker, director of the Safe Climate Campaign, called the 2012 fuel economy gains "a big down payment on a better future." He said the roughly 5 percent gain over 2011 models puts the nation on track to achieving the 54.5 mpg fuel efficiency target set by the Obama administration by the 2025 model year.

"One year ago, the Obama administration put tough standards into effect to protect the climate," Becker said. "Now we see that the auto companies are meeting those standards -- and making money selling cleaner cars."

The Safe Climate Campaign is an environmental group that lobbies to fight global warming.

The EPA's annual report tracks the fuel economy of the cars and light-duty trucks sold in the United States.

"Today's new vehicles are cleaner and more fuel efficient than ever, saving American families money at the gas pump and helping to keep the air that we breathe cleaner," Janet McCabe, acting assistant administrator for EPA's Office of Air and Radiation, said in a statement. "Each year new technologies are coming on line to keep driving these positive trends toward greater and greater efficiency."

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