

December 12, 2013 at 3:25 pm

## EPA: Vehicle fuel efficiency hits all-time high

- David Shepardson
- Detroit News Washington Bureau

*Washington* — The [fuel efficiency](#) of the nation's cars and trucks hit a record in the 2012 model year averaging 23.6 mpg, the Environmental Protection Agency said Thursday. It was up about 5 percent over the prior model year as higher gasoline prices prompted a shift to more cars.

The EPA said fuel economy rose by 1.2 mpg — the second-highest jump over the last 30 years. EPA said preliminary estimates for the 2013 [model year](#) show the fleet averaged 24 mpg, which would be another all-time high. Fuel efficiency has now jumped 22 percent since the 2004 model year.

“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,” said Janet McCabe, the EPA's acting assistant administrator for the office of air and radiation “Each new year, technologies are coming on line to keep driving these positive trends toward greater and greater fuel efficiency.”

The increase in fuel efficiency comes as production of light trucks — pickups, SUVs minivans — in the 2012 model year fell by 6 percent to 36 percent, offsetting a 5 percent increase in 2011.

It came a year after the fuel efficiency of the nation's cars and trucks in the 2011 model year fell to 22.4 mpg, down from 22.6 mpg, as Japanese automakers produced fewer fuel-efficient vehicles because of natural disasters. Vehicle weight and horsepower had risen in 2012 as fewer cars were sold.

EPA said average vehicle weight in the 2012 model year fell by 150 pounds to 3,977 pounds and average horsepower fell 8 to 222 horsepower over 2011, partly due to the decrease in light truck market share. Vehicle power didn't decline: estimated 0 to 60 time was unchanged at 9.4 seconds. Average vehicle size fell by 0.7 square feet. “The decrease in light truck market share was a major factor in the lower weight, horsepower, and footprint,” the EPA report said.

EPA said Mazda Motor Corp. now has the highest overall fuel efficiency of any automaker — 27.1 mpg in 2012, up 2.1 mpg over 2011, followed by Honda Motor Co. at 26.6 mpg and Volkswagen AG at 25.8 mpg. Toyota Motor Corp was fifth at 25.6 mpg. Ten of the 11 automakers rated saw fuel efficiency rise; VW's overall fuel efficiency fell 0.2 mpg.

Ford Motor Co. was ranked eighth to 22.8 mpg, up 1.7 mpg — though its numbers fell by 0.2 mpg in preliminary 2013 figures.

General Motors Co. is ranked ninth at 21.7 mpg — up 1 mpg — but is projected to rise 0.3 mpg to 22 mpg.

Chrysler-Fiat is ranked last out of the 11 ranked carmakers — 20.1 mpg, up 0.7 mpg over 2011. It is projected to jump by 1.5 mpg in 2013.

Hyundai and Kia were not listed because of the EPA's ongoing investigation into its mileage ratings. The automakers revised downward its label ratings last year and agreed to set aside more than \$400 million to compensate owners.

The EPA and National Highway Traffic Safety Administration reached agreement with automakers to nearly double fuel efficiency standards to 54.5 mpg by 2025 -- a figure that translates into about 40 mpg in real world driving. The EPA figures released today mirror window sticker values, not fuel efficiency compliance figures, which are about 20 percent higher.

In an interview, Christopher Grundler, the head of the EPA's Transportation and Air Quality Office, noted the big increases in fuel efficiency. "Automakers are rapidly adapting and bringing to market these new technologies," Grundler said. "These (fuel standards) and customer demand has inspired a lot of innovation around efficiency."

But he conceded future increases will be tough for automakers. "It gets harder. These standards are challenging," Grundler said, saying the fuel efficiency and greenhouse gas standards provide automakers certainty. "We engineered the policy and the standards to preserve consumer choices -- whatever the customer needs they are going to find the vehicle."

Dan Becker, director of the Safe Climate Campaign, said the results were a "big deal."

"It's a big down payment on a better future. One year ago the Obama administration put tough standards into effect to protect the climate. Now we see that the auto companies are meeting those standards—and making money selling cleaner cars. We've taken the biggest single step of any nation to fight global warming," Becker said.

EPA says it predicts weight and power will increase in the 2013 model year, but the agency doesn't have final numbers. The 2013 preliminary figure for horsepower would tie the all-time record set in the 2011 model year.

EPA says direct-injection gasoline engines have increased market share 10-fold, from less than 3 percent in 2008 to more than 30 percent in the 2013 model year. Turbochargers are up five times since 2008. Transmissions with six speeds or more and continuously variable transmissions accounted for 30 percent in 2008 and are projected to exceed 80 percent in 2013.

EPA notes that there are now three times as many hybrids offered in the 2013 model year over 2008.

[dshepardson@detroitnews.com](mailto:dshepardson@detroitnews.com)

From The Detroit News:

<http://www.detroitnews.com/article/20131212/AUTO01/312120106#ixzz2nIr3US4n>