



Could EPA have caught Volkswagen's emissions scheme earlier?

Over a decade ago, the EPA helped develop the technology that would eventually discover VW's cheating on emissions tests. Why didn't the agency discover the company's deception sooner?

By [Patrick Torphy, Staff](#) October 2, 2015

The Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) is probably doing some soul-searching right now.

As first [reported by The Associated Press](#), more than ten years ago, the EPA helped develop the technology that would have caught [Volkswagen's \(VW\) cheating on car emissions tests](#) – but it wasn't used on their diesel cars until this year by independent researchers. Since development, the agency has prioritized using the technology on trucks rather than passenger cars because they pollute more, and there haven't been enough resources to evaluate both.

Consequently, US regulators missed a crucial opportunity to thwart the scheme early on. VW's diesel cars have been emitting up to 40 times the legal limit of key pollutant nitrogen oxides (NOx) during normal driving conditions for seven years without detection.

Auto companies are expected to use their own tests to submit emissions data for certification. But with the company concealing illegal levels of pollution coming from their vehicles, the

"They trust the auto companies to tell the truth. And the auto companies have proven time and again that they don't tell the truth," Dan Becker, director of the Safe Climate Campaign and a veteran of the fight for tougher car emissions regulation, told The Associated Press. "We can't allow the students to test themselves and submit their own grades."

However, some EPA officials say they don't regret the decision not to test cars, arguing that truck and heavy equipment manufacturers have a history of cheating on tests and account for a larger portion of pollution than diesel cars.

According to The Associated Press, the EPA now has plans to crack down on the potential for emissions cheating.

In response, EPA last month announced it would toughen testing and is keeping the details secret from carmakers. The new methods could include the use of the portable devices and other tests that replicate real-world driving or just changing the treadmill script. The EPA will have to prioritize its limited money for testing, Christopher Grundler, the agency's current Transportation and Air Quality director, said last week. The regulator's budget has been slashed 21 percent by Congress since fiscal 2010, according to data on its website.

Meanwhile, some voters and politicians say EPA regulations are overly burdensome already, and want the agency's powers diminished – or even the whole agency abolished.

Last year, conservative polling firm Rasmussen Reports found that only “32 percent of likely voters view the EPA favorably, the lowest number since Rasmussen started asking the question three years ago,” [according to The Hill](#).

<http://www.csmonitor.com/Business/2015/1002/Could-EPA-have-caught-Volkswagen-s-emissions-scheme-earlier>