



By JIM MOTAVALLI / MONEYWATCH / January 8, 2010, 2:28 PM

EPA's New Smog Standards for States Are Likely to Lead to Cleaner Cars, Too

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For most Americans, "smog"--a dangerous mix of chemicals that threatens the health of children, old people and anyone with breathing problems--is what comes out of a tailpipe. Los Angeles's smog is legendary, and most of that is tailpipe-based. So when the **Environmental Protection Agency** [proposed its strong new smog air standards Thursday](#), many people probably thought that car exhaust was the principal target.

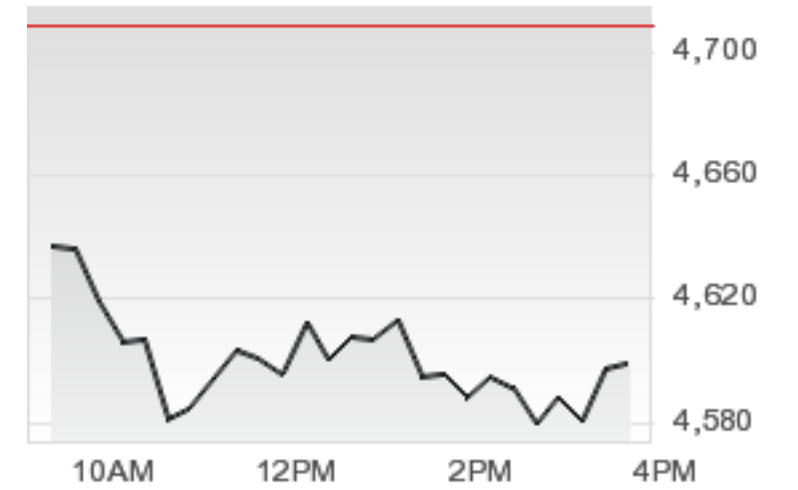
The truth is rather more complicated. In the last 30 years, says **Charles Territo**, a spokesman for the **Alliance of Automobile Manufacturers**, cars have become "99 percent cleaner" in terms of smog chemicals. In fact, he says, cars and trucks aren't even part of the equation anymore--they're "virtually emission-free" when it comes to hydrocarbons, nitrogen oxides and other smog precursors.

So if car exhaust isn't the low-hanging fruit, states to comply with the new federal rules will have to tighten controls on power plants, oil refineries and other industrial facilities. That no doubt will happen, but environmentalists say the tailpipe is still a very tempting target.

"We appreciate how much cleaner cars have become, but that speaks more to how polluting cars used to be," says **Dan Becker**, climate campaigner for the **Center for Auto Safety**. "Cars are still a major source of smog, even after cleaning up a lot, because they were very filthy. The air is still unhealthy for millions of people, and the technology is available inexpensively for cars to clean up further."

Market Data

NASDAQ: Jun 27, 2016



Symbol	Last	Change	% Change
DOW	17,163.70	-237.05	-1.36%
NASDAQ	4,600.99	-106.99	-2.27%
S&P 500	2,003.49	-33.92	-1.66%

One result of the new standards is that some states may opt to join the 14 that are already following the stricter California tailpipe regulations. It's a nearly cost-free way for states to clean up their air, though it will be harder politically in states with automotive industries and supplier bases.

California is already at work on an even tighter set of tailpipe standards, to be called **LEV III**. **According to Ward's Automotive**, "California's proposed LEV III emissions standard would push the threshold for combined nitrogen oxides and hydrocarbons to 30 mg/mile from the current 140 mg/mile, a reduction of 70 percent."

According to **Frank O'Donnell**, president of **Clean Air Watch**, the new ozone standards are "absolutely" an impetus for both California and the EPA to create stronger tailpipe regulations. He said that environmental groups would be lobbying for exactly that. A new federal standard, Tier III, is not likely to be in place until the 2015 model year, however.

The **American Lung Association** (ALA) is on record as favoring stronger tailpipe standards. "When states look at the inventory of where pollution comes from, they'll see that cars are still a big source," said Paul **G. Billings**, an ALA vice president. "Cars are much cleaner, but they can get a lot cleaner using existing technology--it doesn't require a magical breakthrough."


One result of tougher smog and tailpipe standards is that more manufacturers are now making "50-state" cars that comply with all existing regulations.

States definitely will be looking for ways to clean up, says Billings, who points out that every state east of the Mississippi River has what are known as "non-attainment" areas for ozone under the existing, more lax regulations. A map shows these areas concentrated most heavily in the Northeast: Only Vermont has fully compliant air. "And more than 40 states will have non-attainment areas under the new ozone regulations," he said.

Roland Hwang, transportation program director at the **Natural Resources Defense Council**, adds that cleaning up the air involves not just tailpipes, but also cleaner fuels and alternatives to driving, such as public transportation. He says that California's Air Resources Board has "no other choice but adopting common-sense tailpipe standards" because 40 counties and three quarters of the state's population are breathing dirty air.

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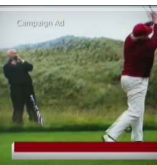
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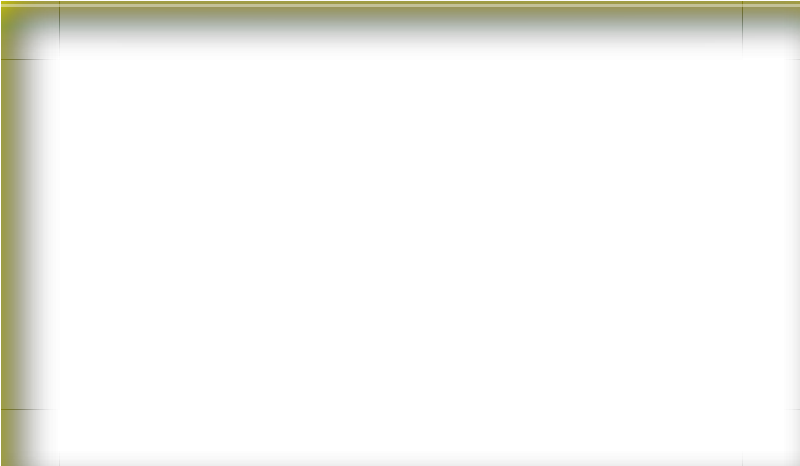


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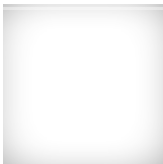
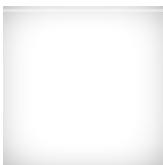
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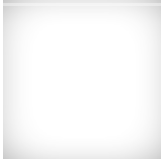
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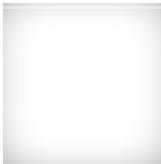
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XOM	89.08	-0.31	-0.35%

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