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Biden poised to ramp up mileage rules for cars and trucks

Eventually reinstates and exceeds Obama's efficiency standards, undone under Trump.

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By Josh Lederman

The Biden administration plans to slowly ramp up pollution and mileage requirements for cars and trucks over the next five years as it works to cut the biggest U.S. source of greenhouse gas emissions and hasten the shift toward electric vehicles, people with knowledge of the plan tell NBC News.

New tailpipe requirements expected to be announced next week by the Environmental Protection Agency and the Transportation Department will put the U.S. back on track toward faster efficiency improvements that were scaled back under former President Donald Trump.

Still, the relatively modest pace envisioned over the next several years is likely to disappoint climate activists who say too much time was already lost during the Trump years.

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The EPA and the Transportation Department had no comment.

Under the forthcoming rules, described to NBC News by a government official and an industry official briefed on the plan, the Biden administration will allow the weaker Trump-era standards

to stay in place through Model Year 2022, a reflection of the fact that it's all but too late to change the rules for vehicles already in or near production. Trump's standards require an annual increase in fuel efficiency of 1.5 percent.

Starting in Model Year 2023, which includes vehicles that will start to be sold next year, auto-makers will be required to meet the standards enshrined in a 2019 deal between major automakers and the State of California, which set its own standards more stringent than the federal government's. Those standards require a roughly 3.7 percent increase in vehicle standards per year.

Then in Model Year 2025, people briefed on the proposal said, auto companies will be expected to implement the more stringent standards that former President Barack Obama put in place before Trump undid them.

Obama's rules, put in place in 2012, required a 5 percent annual increase in fuel economy standards. If the Obama rules had been left intact, they were predicted to raise mileage standards to an average of 54.5 miles per gallon by Model Year 2025, although many vehicles would likely have fallen short of that under real-world driving conditions.

By Model Year 2026, the new Biden rules will be even more ambitious than the Obama standards, requiring faster efficiency improvements, although it's not yet clear by how much. Details of the plan were first reported by The Associated Press.

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