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US Vehicles Set Fuel Economy Record in 2022 as EV Sales Climb

By Correspondent
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U.S. new vehicles set a record high for fuel economy in 2022, with the biggest yearly improvement in nine years to an average of 11 kilometers per liter (26 miles per gallon) as electric vehicle sales jumped, but the Detroit Three automakers continued to lag rivals.

Vehicles were up 0.2 kp/l (0.6 mpg) over 2021 after being unchanged versus 2020, the Environmental Protection Agency said, noting electric vehicles and plug-in hybrid electric vehicles improved the average fuel economy by 0.5 kp/l (1.2 mpg) in 2022. Fuel economy is forecast to increase to 11.4 kp/l (26.9 mpg) in 2023, the EPA said.

EPA Administrator Michael Regan said the report "highlights the historic progress made so far by the industry to reduce climate pollution and other harmful emissions."

The report showed Tesla sold additional emissions credits and General Motors and Mercedes-Benz purchased credits in 2022. Automakers use credits to meet requirements.

Stellantis had the lowest fuel economy of major automakers, followed by GM and Ford, while Tesla is the most efficient followed by Hyundai and Honda. Horsepower, vehicle weight and size all hit new records in 2022 — and are projected to hit again record levels in 2023.

The EPA said EVs, plug-in hybrid and fuel-cell production rose to 7% in 2022 and are projected to hit 12% in 2023. The average range of EVs rose to a new high of 490 kilometers (305 miles) — more than four times the 2011 range.

The report showed Americans kept moving away from cars and are buying more SUVs. Sedans and wagons fell to just 27% of vehicles sold in 2022, while SUVs rose to 54%.

Dave Cooke, senior vehicles analyst at the Union of Concerned Scientists, said the report showed emissions from gas-powered vehicles have barely moved since 2015.

“Automakers are lagging in their efforts to clean up conventional gasoline vehicles, which are still the vast majority of new vehicles sold and will be on the road for years to come,” Cooke said.

The EPA in April proposed sweeping emissions cuts for new vehicles through 2032, including a 56% reduction in projected fleet average emissions over 2026 requirements that it says would result in 67% of new vehicles by 2032 being electric.

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