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EPA says automakers are doing better than ever – but it doesn't amount to much

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Jennifer Mossalgue
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Legacy automakers are still selling millions of gas guzzlers, but if we were to spin some good news out of that, the Environmental Protection Agency reports that emissions levels have now dropped to “record lows” and vehicle fuel economy is now at a “record high.” But what does it really mean?

The EPA just released its annual [Automotive Trends Report](#), which found that the nationwide fleet of new vehicles emitted 10 grams per mile less CO₂ than in 2021, which is a measly 2.2% improvement, while fuel economy rose 0.6 miles per gallon. According to the report, this is a “historic” improvement – but let's not forget that automakers promised 5% back in 2012. Still, since 2004, carbon dioxide emissions have decreased by 27% while fuel economy increased by 35%, the report noted. The fuel economy has more than doubled the annual rate of improvement over the last decade, the report said.

Of course, the EPA notes that electric vehicles are a big reason for even this marginal

improvement. **But in its own take on the data, nonprofit organization the Center for Biological Diversity writes that of the 14 automakers included in the data, only Tesla is producing more than single-digit percentages. And while EV sales jumped, so did the shift from cars to trucks, which negatively impacts efficiency gains.**

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Still, the EPA is looking on the bright side, saying that all 14 major automakers have complied with light-duty greenhouse gas requirements, and production of EVs jumped from 4% in 2021 to 7% in 2022. By 2023, it could jump to 12%, it said.

Meanwhile, the [Biden administration](#) is working to overhaul the auto industry with a shift to electric vehicles. A new rule proposed by the EPA would require that up to two-thirds of new vehicles sold in the US are electric by 2032 – by far the strictest yet to be proposed – but that has been blocked by the House, essentially calling it a mandate for electric vehicles.

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