



Ontario's Drive Clean Program Update

The Ontario Drive Clean program, launched in 1999, reduces harmful vehicle emissions by identifying vehicles that do not meet provincial standards and requiring them to be repaired. The program includes cars, pick-up trucks and other light-duty vehicles throughout the area of the province with the highest population density and the greatest number of vehicles. It also requires emissions tests for diesel-powered heavy-duty trucks and buses registered anywhere in Ontario, as well as non-diesel heavy-duty vehicles in the smog zone.

An independent analysis of emissions data estimates that the program has reduced emissions from Ontario's smog zone equivalent to removing 600,000 light-duty vehicles from Ontario's roads. Particulate matter from diesel heavy-duty vehicles reduction is equivalent to removing 47,000 diesel heavy-duty vehicles from Ontario's roads. If all drivers maintained their cars regularly, NOx (a green house gas) emissions could be reduced by 12 per cent and VOCs (the smog gas) by 30 per cent, according to Environment Canada.

Emission limits for light-duty vehicles were lowered by 11.5% on January 1, 2003, and another 11.5% on January 1, 2005. These test standards are well below standards recommended by the United States Environmental Protection Agency (US EPA).

Emissions standards for all diesel heavy-duty vehicles were tightened on April 1, 2004 and again on April 1, 2005. These standards are now among the most stringent for heavy-duty diesel vehicles in North America.

The following are recent changes to the Drive Clean Program.

As of January 1, 2005, the Drive Clean Program has ceased to mail out a separate mailing to notify you that your vehicle needs testing. There will be a red star, beside the vehicle need a test, on your license renewal form. Please check your form before going to the license bureau.

Effective April 1, 2005, an incentive was implemented to encourage good vehicle maintenance for diesel heavy-duty trucks and buses. A well-maintained truck or bus, that surpasses a 20% opacity emissions standard, will be eligible to have their vehicles tested every two years instead of annually. If however, the vehicle tests above 20%, it will be returned to the annual test.

As of May 1, 2005, hybrid vehicles no longer need to be tested.

As of January 1, 2006 newer vehicles are exempt from testing for license renewal. Testing starts when they are five years old, rather than three years old. In 2006, tests will be required for 2001 and older model vehicles. Previous rules required tests for 2003 model year vehicles but now they will not need testing until 2008.

Future change will occur for a 20-year old light-duty vehicle. Currently they are exempt from emissions testing but this exemption will end with 1988 model year vehicles staying in the program. 1988 model year would have required their last test in 2007.

Re-sale vehicles will continue to require an emissions test for registration renewal when they are one year old, as an important consumer protection measure. The end of the age exemption also applies to resale vehicles, with 1988 and newer model vehicles staying in the program.



A well maintained vehicle will always test well and saves fuel. Estimates are that a tune-up can improve the fuel efficiency of a vehicle by 15 per cent and up to 50 per cent if the vehicle has not been regularly maintained.