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Environment & Climate News

The Heartland Institute's national monthly outreach publication for common-sense environmentalism.

Obama Announces New Fuel Mileage Restrictions

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[Environment > Climate: Greenhouse Gases](#)
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New federal government restrictions will require consumers to purchase vehicles averaging 35.5 miles per gallon by 2016, President Barack Obama has announced.

The new standards, announced May 19, are 40 percent more restrictive than the current requirement of 25 miles per gallon.

Global Warming Targeted

Obama justified the restrictions by asserting better fuel mileage will reduce greenhouse gas emissions and fight global warming.

The new standards are projected to cause "a reduction of approximately 900 million metric tons in greenhouse gas emissions," noted a May 19 White House press release accompanying Obama's announcement.

"Greenhouse gas emissions might not decline much, if at all," countered Jerry Taylor, a senior fellow at the Cato Institute. "U.S. emissions will likely decline, but reduced U.S. demand for crude [oil] would mean reduced global crude prices, which in turn would increase demand for—and consumption of—oil outside the United States. Eventually, most if not all our reductions might be offset by increases elsewhere."

Healthier America?

"We will keep America healthier, cut tons of pollution from the air we breathe, and make a lasting down payment on cutting our greenhouse gas emissions," said EPA Administrator Lisa Jackson in a May 19 press statement.

"Lisa Jackson talking about keeping America healthier through these



restrictions is sadly ironic," said Jay Lehr, science director for The Heartland Institute. "Because fuel economy restrictions force vehicles to be lighter and less crashworthy, the National Research Council reports that existing standards kill approximately 2,000 people per year.

"These new restrictions will likely be a death sentence for about 2,000 more Americans each and every year," Lehr noted.

"CAFE is among the deadliest government regulations we have, and with today's announcement it's going to get even deadlier," agreed the Competitive Enterprise Institute in a May 19 media advisory. "It kills consumers by reducing vehicle size, and now it may well kill car companies by forcing them to produce cars that consumers don't want."

The Obama administration acknowledges the new restrictions will add an average of \$1,300 to the price of each new car sold in the country, while some industry analysts project the costs will be much higher.

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