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The Costs of Obama's New CAFE Standards

Price to Be Paid in Money and Lives

By **Mark Whittington**

President Barack Obama presented the new national CAFÉ standards for automobiles. By 2016, automobiles manufactured in the United States will have to operate at 35.5 miles per gallon. The new standards will cost motorists in money and lives.

The monetary cost of the new CAFÉ standards are readily admitted to. [According to AP](#), President Obama admitted that the CAFÉ standards would cost Americans an average of \$1300 a vehicle. President Obama claimed, though, that the increased vehicle costs would be offset by reduced fuel costs. There are some problems with that assertion, according to a [blogger named Karl, writing for Hot Air](#).

"However, increasing fuel-efficiency reduces the per-mile cost of operating vehicles, which increases the number of miles driven, thus reducing or eliminating any CAFE benefit. Between 1970-2001, the US made cars almost 50% more efficient, but the average number of miles a person drives doubled." The figures cited are from the CATO Institute.

Even if the average miles a person drove remained the same, the decreased amount of gasoline purchased would mean a decrease in tax revenues for both the federal government and various states that rely on gasoline taxes to run various government programs.

Claims by environmentalists that increased CAFÉ standards would cause a decrease in greenhouse gases turn out to be spurious as well. Cars and trucks subject to the increase CAFÉ standards generate only 1.5 percent of greenhouse gases. The new CAFÉ standards would decrease greenhouse gases by only one half of one percent, [Karl writes in Hot Air](#), citing Heritage Foundation figures.

More shockingly, increased CAFÉ standards also increase fatalities in automobile accidents. This is because automobile companies meet the new fuel standards by building smaller cars and trucks built of lighter but more fragile material, which protects motorists less during automobile accidents.

[According to Hot Air's Karl](#), "As for the increased motorist deaths, which the National Academy of Sciences once estimated at 1,300 to 2,600 in 1993 alone, even a less lethal estimate of 800 excess deaths annually is roughly the number of US troops killed annually during the peak years of the Iraq war. Indeed, the estimated cumulative death toll of 46,000 in 2001 suggests that CAFE standards inflict casualties on the magnitude of Vietnam."

The deaths in the Iraq War, not to mention Vietnam, resulted in massive protests. Yet it seems that the Obama administration is enacting a policy that will result in deaths of not soldiers on the battlefield, but of ordinary motorists who will be killed going to work or the grocery store. They will die for not any discernable benefit whatsoever.

Sources: [Automakers, Obama announce mileage, pollution plan](#), Steven R. Hurst, AP, May 19th, 2009

[Obama raising car prices and killing people is just for starters](#), Karl, Hot Air, May 19th, 2009

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