

Car fuel efficiency hits historic high with Mazda, Nissan leading way

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President Obama made some progress on his push to double fuel efficiency standards by 2025, with cars and light trucks in 2013 on average reaching 24.1 miles per gallon.

Automakers raised the fuel efficiency of their new models last year to record levels, according to the Environmental Protection Agency. But they still fall far short of President Obama's goal 54.5 miles per gallon for cars and light trucks.

Vehicles averaged 24.1 mpg or a 0.5 mpg increase over the previous year, marking an improvement of nearly 5 mpg since 2004, according to data released Wednesday. Fuel economy for all vehicles has risen for eight of the past nine years while carbon dioxide emissions are at a record low.

"Today's announcement points to the greatness of American ingenuity and the strength of our auto industry," EPA Administrator Gina McCarthy said in a statement.

"Our report shows that today's vehicles are saving Americans money at the pump while emitting fewer greenhouse gasses," she said. "We are thrilled to see that manufacturers continue to innovate and are bringing technologies to improve fuel economy online even faster than anticipated."

Japanese companies led the way, claiming the top four spots in fuel efficiency standards. Mazdas had the highest fuel economy at 28.1 mpg and lowest greenhouse gas emissions. Nissan, meanwhile, achieved the greatest improvement among all classes of new personal vehicles in the categories of fuel efficiency standards and greenhouse gas reductions.

"Reaching this point is a direct result of a dedicated company-wide effort to scrutinize every aspect of each new model to extract the most fuel efficiency possible," said Pierre Loing, vice president, product planning, Nissan North America. "Our engineers and designers have worked hard to get us here, and we look to continuously improve fuel efficiency of our models to face the challenges of future regulations while surpassing customer expectations."

Ford was the best performing American company with 22.2 mpg. Overall, SUVs, which long ago came to symbolize gas guzzlers, had the greatest improvement in efficiency standards of any class of vehicles.

The Obama Administration has made it a priority to improve the efficiency of cars and light trucks as part of its plans to combat climate change and reduce the country's dependence on oil. It has vowed to double fuel efficiency standards 54.5 mpg by 2025 which it says would cut vehicle emissions in half. It also says it would save Americans \$1.7 trillion in fuel costs and saving 12 billion barrels of oil.

The EPA credited the major auto makers for rolling out technology that resulted in greener vehicles, including including advanced gasoline engines and transmissions, vehicle weight reduction, lower tire rolling resistance, improvements in aerodynamics, diesel engines, more efficient accessories, and improvements in air conditioning systems. To help speed up

technology developments, the Administration is also offering a range of incentives for electrical vehicles, plug-in hybrid vehicles and fuel cell vehicles.

The tougher government standards have been embraced by the industry and environmentalist alike, although the National Automobile Dealers Association has warned they would lead to job losses and add thousands of dollars to the price of a new car. Announced two years ago, the standards build on those that require American-made cars and light trucks to average 34.5 mpg by 2016.