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Fuel efficiency the goal of Obama rules for medium- and heavy-duty trucks

Washington – The Obama administration wants future tractor-trailers, school buses, delivery vans, and other heavy-duty trucks to spend more time on the road and less time at the gas pumps according to newly proposed, first-ever fuel efficiency rules.

The Environmental Protection Agency and the Transportation Department are advancing fuel efficiency regulations for medium- and heavy-duty trucks sold during the 2014 model year and continuing into the 2018 model year.

According to a source familiar with the proposal, the proposal is intended to reduce green house emissions and fuel consumption from long haul trucks by about 20 percent.

Large tractor-trailers log up to 150,000 miles a year. This makes them prime targets for increased fuel efficiency. The plan is reported to seek 10 to 20 percent reductions in fuel consumption and emissions dependent on the size of the vehicle.

Vehicles such as tractor-trailers, transit and school buses and heavy-duty work trucks (i.e. Dodge Ram, Chevrolet Silverado, and Ford F-Series) will be covered by these new regulations. Work trucks experience 10 mpg to 11 mpg, and medium-duty and heavy-duty trucks generally experience 6mpg to 7 mpg. At this rate, they consume about 20 percent of the automotive fuel in the United States.

The White House is seeking ways to reduce green house gas emissions and dependence on foreign oil by promoting more stringent fuel economy standards.

Future new vehicles will be expected to perform at 35.5 mpg by 2016. Government plans are being

developed calling for future vehicle models' performance to range between 47 mpg to 62 mpg by 2025.

Surrounded by truck manufacturers in the Rose Garden in May, President Barack Obama announced that the government would publish the first-ever greenhouse gas emissions and fuel efficiency standards for large trucks this year. The president suggested that tractor-trailer efficiency could be increased by 25 percent by implementing existing technologies.

"This is going to bring down the costs of transporting goods, serving businesses and consumers alike," Obama said on May 21, flanked by executives with Daimler Trucks, Volvo, Cummins and Navistar, and trucking industry and union officials.

The improvements in fuel efficiency will come through a combination of more efficient engines, improved aerodynamics and better tires.

Environmental groups have pointed to a National Academy of Sciences report this year that said the trucks could make broad improvements during the decade through existing technologies. The report found that using advanced diesel engines in tractor-trailers could reduce fuel consumption by up to 20 percent by 2020 while hybrid versions of garbage trucks and buses could see a 35 percent cut in fuel use by 2020.

"Whether you are a company or an individual truck owner, you will be saving money on day one because you'll be saving more on fuel than increased loan payments on a big truck," said David Friedman, research director for the Union of Concerned Scientists.