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Only cars with a sticker to pass through the environmental zone

New instrument to combat particulate matter and nitrogen dioxide in cities

The 1st of March marks the date when the so-called Ordinance on marking of vehicles with low emissions (*Kennzeichnungsverordnung für Kraftfahrzeuge*) goes into effect throughout the country. It allows cities and municipalities to classify passenger cars and trucks into four emissions classes, thereby doing something to improve air quality in inner cities. The new ordinance provides the basis for so-called environmental zones which many cities would like to establish in order to combat particulate matter and other air pollutants. Vehicles with particularly high emissions, such as EURO 1 diesel engines not fitted with a particle filter or Otto engine vehicles without a catalytic converter, will not get a sticker when the regulation takes effect; that is, they may not drive through the environmental zone. Andreas Troge, President of the Federal Environment Agency (UBA), said, "I applaud the long-awaited regulation on the distribution of these stickers, as it clears the path for cleaner air in our inner cities. If compliance is broad I expect to see considerably less particulate pollution caused by road traffic."




The ordinance defines four pollutant groups for passenger cars and trucks, which are oriented towards valid European emissions limit values. A differentiated regulation applies for diesel engine vehicles: depending on European emissions standard (EURO 1 to 4) vehicles will receive either a red, yellow, or green sticker. Operators of a diesel engine vehicle can improve their vehicle classification by retrofitting it with a particle reduction system.

On the other hand there are only two classifications of gasoline-driven engines: Pollutant group 1 (no sticker) for vehicles worse than EURO 1, and Pollutant group 4 (green sticker) for all other vehicles fitted with a catalytic converter. This classification will amount to a relative disadvantage for gasoline-driven cars that are similar to EURO 1 but were registered prior to its regulation, yet possess a catalytic converter. According to UBA estimates there are probably 1.4 million (2007 figure) vehicles registered between 1986 and 1992 that are comparable in terms of engineering and limit values with EURO 1 gasoline-driven vehicles. UBA believes that the new ordinance should be enforced by the *Laender* in practice by classifying these gasoline vehicles as equivalent to those bearing a green sticker.

If municipalities follow through with the possibilities offered by the *Kennzeichnungsverordnung*, they can achieve considerable improvement of air quality in Germany's inner cities. In addition to the

expected improvements in particulate concentrations, the UBA believes that environmental zones can play a role in reducing the negative impact of nitrogen dioxide on man and the environment. There is an urgent need for action as concerns this pollutant: about half the urban measuring stations located near traffic areas record higher levels of nitrogen dioxide than the average annual mean of 40 micrograms per cubic meter of air that must be complied with after 2010.

The following table illustrates in simplified form the passenger car classifications into the various pollutant groups.

Pollutant group	1	2	3	4
Sticker:	No sticker			
Requirement for Diesel	Euro 1 or worse	Euro 2 or Euro 1 + particle filter	Euro 3 or Euro 2 + particle filter	Euro 4 or Euro 3 + particle filter
Requirement for Gasoline	without catalytic converter			Euro 1 with catalytic converter or better

Dessau, 1 March 2007