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UNTIL 3:00 P.M. (1975)

June 27, 1975

Office of the White House Press Secretary

THE WHITE HOUSE

FACT SHEET

Amendments to the Clean Air Act  
(affecting automobile emission standards)

The President recommended today that Congress pass legislation designed to amend the Clean Air Act by extending the current automobile emission standards from 1977 until 1981.

While this action will have no significant impact on our efforts to achieve the objectives of the Clean Air Act, the proposed modifications are necessary to (1) avoid certain recently recognized potential health risks associated with the catalytic converter and (2) permit substantially greater fuel efficiencies over the next five years.

All of the enforcement, certification and inspection measures contained in the Clean Air Act will be retained.

This proposal supercedes Section 503, Title V, of the President's Energy Independence Act of 1975 which he sent to Congress on January 30, 1975. At that time, the President proposed emission standards based on a modification of the current California standards.

BACKGROUND

After submitting the Energy Independence Act to the Congress, the Environmental Protection Agency held public hearings on the manufacturers' requests for a suspension of the 1977 auto emission standards and also took testimony related to five-year emission levels. The hearings established that the catalytic converter, used to meet the HC and CO standards for 1975 and 1976 model year vehicles, produces sulfuric acid in amounts that can pose a significant public health risk.

In addition, because of the technology likely to be used to achieve these tighter standards, automobile emissions of sulfuric acid may double if the more stringent HC and CO standards previously proposed in the Energy Independence Act are imposed for 1977 and subsequent years.

Accordingly, the President directed an interagency task force to undertake a major review of the public health, energy and consumer cost implications of several widely discussed levels of automobile emission standards. The President's decision announced today is based upon this review.

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The President will propose legislation to maintain the current automobile emission standards through model year 1980. This will accomplish the following objectives:

- . Health. Avoid increasing the potential adverse health impacts of certain automobile emission devices by retaining current controls on known health hazards, such as carbon monoxide and hydrocarbons, without the risk of increasing other imperfectly understood but potentially dangerous pollutants such as sulfuric acid.
- . Energy. Achieve an increase of 40 percent or greater in automobile fuel efficiency by 1980.
- . Environment. Achieve almost all the environmental objectives we would have achieved by going to stricter standards.
- . Economy. Minimize the inflationary impact of Federal regulations on the cost of automobiles to consumers. Avoid aggravating unemployment, especially in the automobile industry.

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