

FLEET OPINION

NO_x EMISSIONS SCANDAL

As VW shows, CO₂ is not the only pollutant

By Andy Eastlake

“The Volkswagen emissions scandal has drawn into sharp focus the need to make sure that fleet vehicles not only cut CO₂ emissions but also reduce the polluting emissions – particularly NO_x and particulates – which damage local air quality and can have serious human health impacts.

While the Low Carbon Vehicle Partnership's (LowCVP) primary remit has always been to help reduce road transport CO₂ emissions and contribute to the UK's climate targets, we have also worked on the principle that cutting carbon should never come at the expense of a more general worsening of air pollution.

The LowCVP has already taken action to make sure this is the case in specific real-world circumstances. Mindful, for example, of the significance of buses in terms of emissions in urban areas, we recently developed the standards for the new Low Emission Bus scheme for Department for Transport (DfT) and Office for Low Emission Vehicles (OLEV).

This scheme mandates the latest Euro 6 standards, but also tests vehicles across a representative cycle to ensure reductions are delivered. The scheme goes on to award funding for increased levels of carbon saving and, importantly, for increasing levels of zero emission operation.

We are in a rare situation where the heavy duty market is actually leading the passenger car and van markets in implementing testing regimes to confirm real-world performance and we must work even harder together to ensure the new car tests are robust and realised in everyday conditions.

Earlier this month, Transport for London published a study to better understand the in-service emissions performance of new Euro 6 vehicles. Diesel cars were found to produce significantly lower emissions than those at Euro 5, although, in London driving, emissions of NO_x were significantly higher than the type approval limits for most vehicles.

We know there is work to be done to ensure rapid NO_x reductions in urban areas. The transition to full Euro 6 standards will help to achieve this. Every member of the Low Carbon Vehicle Partnership has a role to play in bringing this forward as quickly as possible. ”

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LOW EMISSION VEHICLES

Get on board, or fall behind competitors

By Chris Chandler

“2015 is likely to go down as a pivotal year for ultra low emission vehicles (ULEVs) as the SMMT announced that plug-in vehicle sales in the UK increased fourfold in the first five months of 2015.

In the first half of 2015, more plug-in vehicles were registered than in the whole of 2014, demonstrating a growing appetite from drivers and increased supply from manufacturers to meet this demand. The acceleration of the market for plug-in vehicles shows no sign of slowing and, what's more, there are some exciting new plug-in vehicles on the horizon which will no doubt increase this ULEV population.

Our recent Lex Autolease Report on Company Motoring 2015 reflected the significance of environmental considerations and the need for ULEVs. Almost 80% of fleet managers reported that the environmental impact of their fleet was “important”, with nearly three-quarters saying this has increased in the past two years.

While this news is very positive, it comes with a warning: many fleet operators are not fully prepared for the arrival of plug-in vehicles on their fleets, despite the current growth in the market. With Lex Autolease's customer fleet now comprising almost 1% plug-in vehicles, strategies and policies need to be put in place.

Consideration should be given to how and where employees will charge the vehicles. Will the company or the employees provide chargepoints, or does the onus fall on both? Will the vehicle allocation and choice lists be driven by wholelife cost calculations? How will ‘fuel’ be dealt with – does a company want to provide the employee with much of the fuel benefit to promote ULEVs, or does it want the cost savings?

If strategy and policy changes are planned, the transition to plug-in vehicles can be simple and positive. It can link in with company travel and environmental strategies, reducing the carbon footprint and operating costs of a fleet.

The fact that nearly 35,000 plug-in vehicles are now on UK roads shows that the growth of this fledgling market is beginning to gain pace. It is up to fleet managers to decide whether they want to capitalise on the opportunities ULEVs present, or fall behind their competitors. ”

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