

California Gov. Newsom orders 2035 phaseout of gas-powered vehicles, calls for fracking ban

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Image 1. California Governor Gavin Newsom speaks at a press conference on September 23, 2020, in Sacramento, California, where he announced an executive order requiring all new passenger vehicles sold to be zero-emission by 2035. The governor says this would achieve a significant reduction in greenhouse gas emissions. California would be the first state with such a rule. Photo: Daniel Kim/The Sacramento Bee via AP

Saying that California must keep leading the fight against climate change, Governor Gavin Newsom on September 23 issued an executive order. It will require all new car sales to be zero-emission vehicles by 2035.

The order has the effect of a law and will require that new vehicles release no pollutants.

Newsom also supports a ban on the use of hydraulic fracturing, or fracking, which is a way of removing oil or gas from the ground. Critics say fracking can pollute water and air and can contribute to the greenhouse gases that cause global warming, but others say it is safe.

California Joins 15 Countries In Zero-Emission Plan

Under Newsom's order, the California Air Resources Board would implement the phaseout of new gas-powered cars and light trucks and require other trucks to be zero-emission by 2045 where possible. California would be the first state in the country to mandate 100 percent zero-emission vehicles. Fifteen other countries have committed to phasing out gas-powered cars.

The two climate change efforts would accelerate the state's aim to reduce carbon emissions and petroleum hazards. Carbon dioxide is one of the greenhouse gases contributing to the heating up of Earth's climate, scientists say.

"In the next 15 years we will eliminate in the state of California the sales" of gasoline-powered cars, Newsom said. He spoke at a news conference in Sacramento, California before signing the order.

His order tells the Air Resources Board to begin drafting regulations to achieve ending the sale of new gas-powered cars by 2035.



Larger Market Should Drive Down Prices

The governor said that not everyone would embrace his order. However, he emphasized that the order would not prevent Californians from owning gas-powered cars, or buying or selling them used.

California's action will help spur innovation for zero-emission vehicles and, by creating a huge market, will drive down the cost of those cars and trucks, Newsom said. More than 1.63 million new cars and trucks are expected to be sold in the state in 2020, said the California New Car Dealers Association.

He noted that California is home to 34 manufacturers of electric vehicles and that just under 50 percent of all the electric vehicle purchases in the country are in this state. Phasing out gas-powered cars will help to bring some jobs to California, he said.

Carbon Neutrality Is State's Goal

Climate scientists say the world must stop production of gas- and diesel-powered vehicles to limit global warming. California and other governments across the world are seeking to achieve carbon neutrality by 2045, and it will take years for older vehicles to be replaced by zero-emission models.

Carbon neutrality involves reducing carbon emissions and increasing the use of carbon offsets. Those are environmental projects that reduce emissions of greenhouse gases in the atmosphere.

Beau Boeckmann, president of Galpin Motors dealerships in Los Angeles, California, said the 2035 mandate "sounds a little scary to some at first," but that everything evolves in the world. The auto industry eventually will benefit by doing the right thing, he said.

"Pollution is a terrible thing," Boeckmann said. He grew up in the Los Angeles area, which had a brown haze, he said. "L.A. was known for smog like London was known for fog."

Opponents Call Order 'Extremist,' Attack Newsom

State Senate Republican leader Shannon Grove of Bakersfield called Newsom's order "extremist." She said the governor's time would be better used protecting Californians from wildfires rather than banning cars that most state residents rely on to provide for their families.

Cathy Reheis-Boyd is president of the Western States Petroleum Association. She noted that Newsom had lined up expensive zero-emission cars as a backdrop to his news conference.

"It's interesting that the governor was standing in front of nearly \$200,000 worth of electric vehicles as he told Californians that their reliable and affordable cars and trucks would soon be not welcome in our state," she said. "Big and bold ideas only make sense if affordable for us all."

Newsom, Trump Face Off Over Climate

Newsom criticized President Donald Trump's administration in September for ignoring climate change. He said that California's deadly wildfires were grim reminders of what lies ahead for the nation if political leaders in Washington don't take action.

As the Earth has gotten warmer, California has gotten hotter and drier. Wildfires spread more easily as the planet experiences climate change.

While meeting with Newsom in Sacramento in September, Trump expressed skepticism about climate change, saying, "It'll start getting cooler. You just watch."

Environmentalists Praise Order, Push For More

Environmentalists who had urged Newsom to accelerate California's climate protection praised his order.

At the same time, other environmental groups faulted him for not doing more to restrict oil production. They also want him to protect the health of people living near oil drilling.

In November, Newsom imposed a temporary stop to new hydraulic fracking permits, saying he wanted them to undergo scientific review. Since April, however, his administration has issued close to 50 new permits to two companies, frustrating environmentalists.

"Newsom is really good at making announcements that sound big but they actually aren't. We can't let the fact that he's acting on cars eclipse the fact that he's still protecting the oil industry," said Kassie Siegel, director of the Climate Law Institute at the Center for Biological Diversity.

Since taking office, Newsom has faced pressure from environmental groups. They want him to ban new oil and gas drilling and phase out fossil fuel extraction.

Workers In Oil Country Face Trouble

The Democratic governor has said he will take a more measured approach for the oil workers and cities and counties that depend on the petroleum industry for jobs.

California oil industry representatives have argued against phasing out oil production in the state, which has some of the strictest environmental regulations in the world. The representatives say it would force more oil to be imported from countries that do not have the same environmental safeguards.

Across California, cars, trucks and other vehicles are the largest emitters of greenhouse gases. They account for about 40 percent of the statewide total, and their emissions have been creeping upward in recent years. Reducing transportation pollution is the state's biggest challenge in achieving its goal of lowering emissions.