

Report to the Joint Standing Committee on
Environment and Natural Resources

Annual Report on California's Advanced Clean Cars Program and Federal Motor Vehicle Emissions Control Requirements

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I. Purpose

This report is prepared in accordance with Maine Revised Statutes, Title 38, Section 585-D. Section 585-D requires the Department of Environmental Protection to submit an annual report to the joint standing committee of the Legislature having jurisdiction over environment and natural resources matters regarding the status of the regulatory program adopted by the California Air Resources Board for new motor vehicle emissions, known as the Advanced Clean Cars II program, and the adoption of that program by other states, as well as any updates regarding federal motor vehicle emissions control requirements.

II. California Advanced Clean Cars II

A. Background

ACC II is a set of regulations that include the Low-Emission Vehicle (LEV) IV program, Greenhouse Gas emissions reduction program, and Zero-Emission Vehicle (ZEV) sales requirements. It builds off an earlier regulation, Advanced Clean Cars I (ACC I), which was adopted by Maine in 1998 and for which the emission standard requirements for new vehicles sold in Maine remain in effect through model year 2025. The California Air Resources Board (CARB) adopted ACC II in 2022 to reduce motor vehicle emissions of criteria pollutants and greenhouse gases. The ZEV component of the regulation, which was adapted from the existing ACC I Program, requires manufacturers of passenger cars and light-duty trucks to produce and deliver an increasing percentage of ZEVs for sale. The annual ZEV sales requirements associated with ACC II are shown in Figure 1 below.

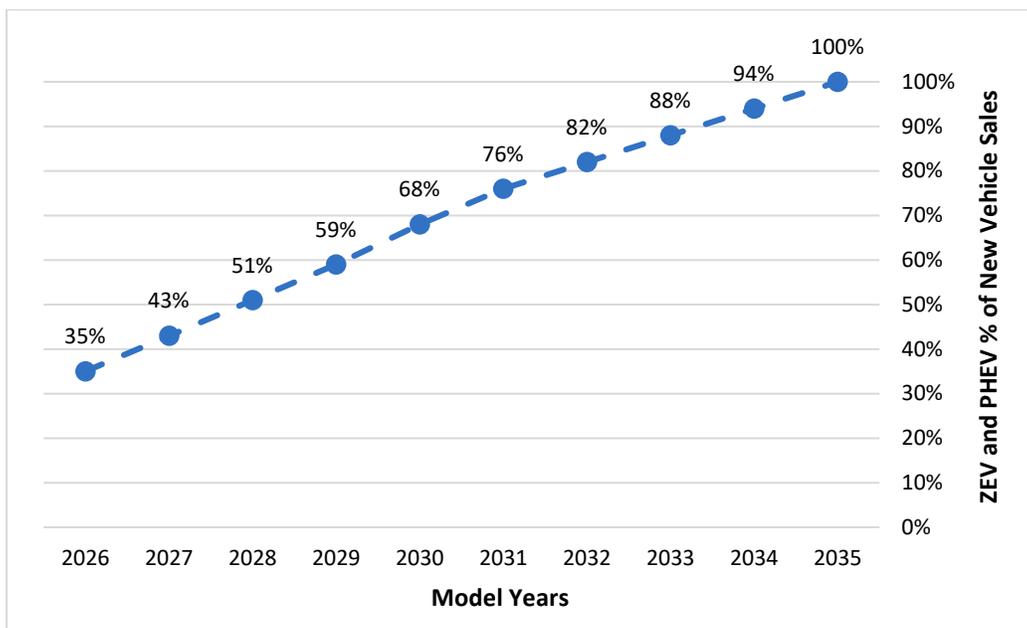


Figure 1
ACC II ZEV Sales Requirements

In order to meet these requirements, manufacturers may use BEVs, fuel-cell electric vehicles (FCEVs), and PHEVs that emit zero tailpipe emissions while operating on battery power. ACC II applies to passenger cars (i.e., vehicles designed to transport 12 persons or less) and light-duty trucks with a gross vehicle weight rating less than 8,500 pounds (collectively referred to as light-duty vehicles or LDVs).

Class 2b and 3 vehicles, which include many of the medium-sized trucks used by commercial contractors and others, are subject to the Advanced Clean Trucks (ACT) regulation. However, manufacturers may elect to certify these vehicles and earn vehicle credits under the ACC II ZEV regulation; such vehicles would then be ineligible to earn credits under the ACT regulation.

In addition, ACC II provides zero-emission vehicle assurance measures, such as minimum warranty and durability requirements, increasing serviceability, and by facilitating charging and battery labeling. These assurance measures help provide certainty to the market that zero-emissions vehicles are held to performance standards, able to be maintained, and have access to warranties that are comparable to those associated with internal combustion engine vehicles.

To date, California, Vermont, Oregon, Washington, Massachusetts, New York, Colorado, Maryland, Delaware, New Mexico, New Jersey, Rhode Island, and the District of Columbia have adopted California's ACC II standards, as allowed under Section 177 of the Clean Air Act. These jurisdictions account for more than 35% of national new light-duty vehicle sales that must now meet California automotive emissions standards.

B. Recent Federal Actions Regarding the California Clean Cars Program

On December 26, 2023, California submitted a request to EPA to grant a waiver of preemption under Section 209(b) of the Clean Air Act (CAA) for the state's ACC II regulation. Without this waiver, neither California nor any Section 177 state that adopts ACC II can enforce the rules. EPA subsequently issued this waiver on December 17, 2024.

However, on June 12, 2025, Congress passed resolutions under the Congressional Review Act to disapprove EPA waivers of preemption for the emissions standards in ACC II. Because waivers are required to enforce California's standards, the resolutions created a level of uncertainty as to which California emissions standards are left in effect.

Following EPA's revocation of the waiver previously issued to California, emergency rulemaking was initiated and subsequently approved by California's Office of Administrative Law. This rulemaking clarified that the emissions standards for criteria pollutants from ACC I (LEV III standards) still apply for vehicles and engines, and that auto manufacturers may opt to certify vehicles to the criteria pollutant emission standards of ACC II (LEV IV standards) while litigation surrounding the California waiver revocation is ongoing. As of December 2025, California was

undertaking the formal rulemaking process to permanently adopt the emergency vehicle emissions regulations from ACC I.

C. Advanced Clean Cars I (ACC I) in Maine

As discussed above, Maine currently implements California's Advanced Clean Cars I program, which runs through model year (MY) 2025. ACC I is composed of emission standards for criteria pollutants as well as greenhouse gases, along with zero emission vehicle sales requirements. ACC I sunset at the end of 2025 and will no longer be in effect in 2026, at which time Maine reverted back to federal standards for LDVs.

III. Federal Motor Vehicle Emissions Control Requirements

A. Background

In June 2024, the Federal U.S. EPA promulgated new and stronger standards to further reduce harmful air pollutant emissions from light-duty and medium-duty vehicles starting with model year (MY) 2027.¹ Reduced vehicle emissions are designed to provide important benefits to communities near major roadways, where low-income households are concentrated and are disproportionately exposed to air pollution from vehicles. The federal standards are intended to be phased in over model years 2027-2032.

For light-duty vehicles, EPA's 2024 standards are designed to increase in stringency each year from MY 2027-2032. The greenhouse gas standards were projected to result in an industry-wide average target for the light-duty fleet of 85 grams/mile of CO₂ in MY 2032, representing a nearly 50 percent reduction in projected fleet average emissions levels relative to existing MY 2026 standards.

EPA established "Tier 4" criteria pollutant emissions standards for non-methane organic gases (NMOG), NO_x, PM, and other criteria pollutants and their precursors. For light-duty vehicles, Tier 4 NMOG plus NO_x standards project a 50 percent reduction by 2032 compared to Tier 3 standards. Further, MDVs' Tier 4 reductions are estimated at 58 to 70 percent from Tier 3. EPA's established PM standard of 0.5 mg/mi is to be fully phased in for LDVs and MDVs by MYs 2030 and 2031, respectively. EPA projects the PM standard would reduce tailpipe PM emissions from gasoline vehicles by over 95 percent. These standards would also reduce emissions of mobile source air toxics.

During the development of this rule, EPA projected that the new national standards could accelerate the transition to clean vehicle technologies. EPA projected that, from MYs 2030-2032, manufacturers may choose to produce battery electric vehicles (BEVs) for about 30 to 56 percent of new light-duty vehicle sales and about 20 to 32 percent of new medium-duty vehicle

¹ <https://nepis.epa.gov/Exe/ZyPDF.cgi?Dockkey=P1019VP5.pdf>

sales.² EPA also projected that consumers would see an increase in the availability of other clean vehicle technologies, including hybrid electric vehicles and plug-in hybrid electric vehicles, as well as cleaner gasoline vehicles. Unlike ACC II, EPA does not have a ZEV sales requirement and auto manufacturers could choose to employ ZEVs, PHEVs, Hybrid and ICE vehicles to meet the proposed fleet-wide standards.

B. Recent Federal Actions

In 2009, EPA issued the Endangerment and Cause or Contribute Findings for Greenhouse Gases under Section 202(a) of the Clean Air Act – otherwise known as the 2009 Endangerment Finding. In the Finding, EPA determined that greenhouse gases threaten public health and welfare and established EPA’s obligation under the Clean Air Act to regulate GHG emissions from mobile sources. This provided a legal basis for the EPA to establish emission standards such as those in the Light-Duty/Medium-Duty Multi-Pollutant Rule.

On July 29, 2025, EPA released a proposal to rescind the 2009 Greenhouse Gas Endangerment Finding, and in turn, repeal GHG emission standards for new cars and trucks contained in the Light-Duty/Medium-Duty Multi-Pollutant rule. On February 18, 2026 (91 Fed. Reg. 7686³) EPA finalized the rescission of the Finding and repealed all greenhouse gas emission standards for light-duty, medium-duty, and heavy-duty vehicles and engines.

² <https://nepis.epa.gov/Exe/ZyPDF.cgi?Dockkey=P1019VP5.pdf>

³ <https://www.federalregister.gov/documents/2026/02/18/2026-03157/rescission-of-the-greenhouse-gas-endangerment-finding-and-motor-vehicle-greenhouse-gas-emission>