Vehicle emissions in real driving conditions: Council gives green light to second package

On 12 February 2016, the Council gave its green light to the adoption of the second package of rules to introduce real driving emission (RDE) tests. The new tests are intended to measure more accurately pollutant emissions from cars and other light vehicles.

The need for new tests

For their approval, new models of vehicles are currently subject to laboratory tests of their emissions. However, analysis has shown that vehicles produced in line with existing EU standards generate substantially higher emissions on the road than in laboratory conditions. This problem was detected in particular in relation to emissions of diesel vehicles of the pollutant substance NOx. That is why new procedures to measure emissions in real driving conditions are needed.

Emission limits and conformity factors

The second package on RDE tests establishes the emission limits applicable in these tests and the dates when these will apply to new models and to new vehicles.

The final requirements will be introduced in two steps. The first should apply from September 2017 for new models and from September 2019 for new vehicles. During this first period, a conformity factor of up to 2.1 (110%) will be allowed for exceeding the NOx emissions limit (80 mg/km). The aim is to give manufacturers time to gradually adapt to the new RDE rules. This first conformity factor will be phased out at the latest in 2021.

In a second stage, from January 2020 for new models and from January 2021 for new vehicles, there will still be the possibility to apply a conformity factor. However this second conformity factor will be only 1 plus the error margin, which is currently set at 0.5. (With a conformity factor of 1.5 the limit could be exceeded by 50%). The error margin reflects statistical and technical uncertainties of the tests.

This second conformity factor will be annually reviewed to take into consideration technical improvements to the test equipment.

Test trips

To prevent the tested vehicles from being driven in a biased manner, the new rules define in measurable parameters the characteristics of the test trips (speed range, elevation gain...).

Defeat devices

To avoid the use of banned defeat devices, this second package introduces rules to improve supervision of the emission control strategy of vehicles. Car manufacturers will be required to provide more information on this to the authorities.

Timeline and next steps

On 28 October 2015, the second package received a positive vote from the corresponding regulatory committee (Technical Committee for Motor Vehicles, TCMV), a Commission body where all members states are represented.

As this legal act is a Commission regulation subject to the regulatory procedure with scrutiny, the text was then submitted to the Council and the European Parliament. The Parliament voted against a resolution to block it on 3 February 2016, giving its green light to the package. The Council decided not to oppose its adoption during its meeting on 12 February 2016 as a point without discussion. Following this Council decision, the Commission may adopt the regulation.

Other two packages more are expected to complete the legal framework of real driving emission tests.
• Real driving emissions: Council gives green light to first package
• Draft Commission regulation on real driving emissions tests (second package)

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