



How Leftist Global Warming Policy Will Wreck Your Truck

Description

USA: I was talking with a friend the other day about canceled airline flights trying to get home to Montana from a vacation in Alaska and the seemingly unrelated topic of the high price of pickup trucks. The thought occurred to me that they are connected by way of another government-sponsored mass formation psychosis that's been building for the last five decades or so: global cooling, global warming, climate change, or whatever.

There's a pretty simple reason why trucks will continue to get more popular and expensive: federal regulations attempting to reduce the production of carbon dioxide (CO₂) is forcing the elimination of fossil fuels in normal light-duty vehicles based on the flawed premise that CO₂ is a pollutant.

First, a quick primer on automotive emissions regulation. The EPA has been regulating engine tailpipe pollutants under the Clean Air Act (CAA) since the early '70s. These gases are known as "criteria pollutants" in the industry and are actually pollutants in the strict sense of the word — harmful and unintended byproducts of imperfect combustion. From the beginning, there have been four of them relevant to vehicles: hydrocarbons (HC), carbon monoxide (CO), nitrogen oxides (NO_x), and particulate matter (PM).

Advances in engine technology have virtually eliminated these. Think about it: when was the last time you heard about someone locking himself in a garage to commit suicide from carbon monoxide poisoning (not that you should go out and try to prove it)? It's difficult to fill a garage with enough CO to do that with a properly running modern engine.

It's also important to note that the EPA's regulatory structure is quite demanding, with strictly defined caps and draconian enforcement protocols as well as fines that can be pretty much whatever amount the agency decides, with no right of appeal at all. It's also what is referred to as a "type approval" regulatory system that requires tremendous testing and reporting to the agency and getting formal certificates of approval from the agency before a single vehicle can leave the manufacturing plant's parking lot — not even to be loaded onto a train that's on a track that runs through that parking lot. Auto manufacturers tend to avoid messing with the EPA if at all possible because it would be very easy for the EPA to bankrupt a company if it felt like it.

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