

Obama wants more fuel-efficient delivery trucks on US roads



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UPPER MARLBORO, Md. — Drawing a link between reduced fuel consumption and climate change, President Barack Obama said Tuesday that his administration will issue tougher fuel-efficiency standards for delivery trucks by March 2016.

Obama said helping these vehicles use less fuel would have the triple benefit of making the U.S. less dependent on imported oil, keeping more money in consumer pockets and reducing the greenhouse gas emissions blamed for global warming.

“It’s not just a win win. It’s a win, win, win,” Obama said at a Maryland distribution center for Safeway, where he was flanked by two delivery trucks. “You got three wins.”

Heavy-duty trucks make up just 4 percent of the vehicles on the nation’s roadways, he said, but are responsible for about 20 percent of the climate-changing gases that are spewed into the atmosphere by the transportation sector.

Obama said ordering the Department of Transportation and the Environmental Protection Agency to develop new standards for the 2018 vehicle model year, and beyond, is an example of the kind of steps he intends to take on his own to bolster the economy when he thinks Congress isn’t doing its job.

The new fuel-efficiency rules would come on top of standards in place for the 2014-2018 model years.

Obama also said companies that want to join an existing public-private partnership focused on energy-efficient vehicles will get specialized resources and technical expertise from the Department of Energy.

Much of what Obama announced had already been made public, including by the president himself.

Obama discussed the need for new fuel-efficiency standards in last month’s State of the Union address, as well as in the climate change plan he announced last June.

Trucking industry representatives and environmental advocates welcomed his announcement.

“This announcement is another historic milestone for commercial vehicles and the many industries which depend on the efficient, reliable power of diesel and natural gas engines,” said Tom Linebarger, the chief executive and chairman of Cummins, who spoke on behalf of a trucking industry group that has worked with the administration to increase fuel efficiency for heavy-duty engines and vehicles.

Vickie Patton, general counsel for the Environmental Defense Fund, applauded the promised reductions in air pollution and oil consumption and the projected dollar savings to families and businesses that would come from more fuel-efficient vehicles.

Obama called Safeway a leader on the issue. He said the company has spent money on cleaner, more efficient trucks with improved aerodynamics, better tires and larger-capacity trailers, and encourages companies it hires to ship its products to do the same.

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