



Colorado Air Care News

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As the emissions program evolves, so must emissions repair shop owners and technicians

by Donny Seyfer, AMA

As many of you are aware, the emissions program as we know it is evolving.

It is pretty likely that you have seen the remote sensing vans parked at various highway on-ramps collecting emissions data in a passive and unintrusive way. For owners that tip the GPM scales too much, the process will continue much as it has for the past decade; owners will be required to have their vehicle tested in the familiar I/M 240 mode and, if necessary, have repairs made to their vehicles. So the question is, "what can we, as registered emissions repair facilities, do?"

We certainly aren't seeing anywhere near the number of emissions failures that we used to, but still, we have all of this knowledge and we would like to put it to use. Many of you who know me already know what I am going to say so skip the next sentence. For the rest of you who don't, I have a two-word answer for you, "Preach maintenance."

I don't know about you but I have a real problem following a vehicle that is clearly polluting. It is pretty evident most of the time that the owner of said vehicle doesn't know and doesn't care that their car is making it harder

for all of us to breath. You can often see the evidence on the vehicle itself -- windows you cannot see through and the collection of dirt samples three layers deep. In the past, these folks have been the hardest to reach and get into our shops for repairs. Frankly, many of us cringe at having to repair these vehicles.

However, the current environment (no pun intended) may be shaping up to get these folks "cleaned up". With gas prices approaching the \$2 per gallon point many people may now be "reachable" by taking the back way to the front door. If we, as shop owners and technicians, make the public more aware of how preventive maintenance can stretch their overall transportation dollar, by making their vehicle last longer and use less fuel, we can add value to the work we do for them, and offer services that take advantage of our emission diagnostic skills in a new way.

How about offering gas mileage screenings? Is this any different than the process you go through to confirm and offer an estimate to repair an emissions failure?

Customers may not voluntarily be "good citizens" and make sure that their vehicle stays efficient

and clean between emissions screenings, but I am willing to bet they would be more than happy to pay you a fee to save them some gas money. Let's face it, there are almost no vehicles on the road that you cannot find some needed maintenance on that will benefit the customer either through an improvement in gas mileage or by extending the life of their vehicle. Think about everything from engine management issues, tires that are under inflated, cooling systems that slow the engine's warm-up time, dirty air filters, poor alignment and the list can go on for quite some time.

The bottom line is that if you want more business, in a world where cars don't break down as much as they used to, it is up to you to become a preventive maintenance evangelist.

Whether you are a technician, service advisor or shop owner it is up to you, one by one, to help the public understand that, in this economy, automobiles are just too expensive to neglect and replace every three years.

Donny Seyfer is the manager of Seyfer Automotive, Inc. in Wheat Ridge.

Proper diagnosis is the first and most important step for technicians and owners

Thorough check of vehicle's emissions control systems and proper diagnosis ensures proper fix the first time.

by Rick Salazar, CDOR

The Colorado Department of Revenue (CDOR) receives complaints from time to time concerning emissions repairs.

Warm summertime weather brings some of the more interesting and, at times, harder to diagnose, problems.

A good example was recently brought to the attention of CDOR.

The situation involved a 1994 Ford F-250 van. The vehicle was rated as a light-duty truck with a gross vehicle weight requirement (GVWR) of 8,450 pounds, just under the heavy-duty limit, and it was equipped with a 30-gallon fuel tank. The van had been tested and had failed for high CO readings. However, when the owner took his vehicle in to be repaired, a diagnostic evaluation found no faults. The repair facility then had the vehicle retested and it passed the emissions test with no problem.

The owner of the vehicle was, needless to say, upset that he had just paid \$135 for a diagnostic evaluation only to find out that his vehicle passed the I/M 240 emissions test with no repairs. The owner claimed that the vehicle had always passed the emissions test, and decided to file a complaint with the CDOR emissions division.

CDOR contacted the owner and arranged for the vehicle to be taken to the Broomfield Emissions Technical Center for an evalua-

tion. When the van arrived at the station, the ambient temperature was in the mid 80s. Joe Lavonis, a technician with the Colorado Department of Public Health and Environment (CDPHE) inspected the vehicle and reran an I/M 240 test. The vehicle failed for high CO. Joe's diagnosis, and the results from the I/M 240 test were consistent -- the vehicle's evaporative system canister was loaded with fuel vapors and purged during the test causing the vehicle to fail. Test readings with the canister hooked up were failing. When the canister was disconnected, the test readings passed well below the limits. Once the evap system canister unloaded the vehicle passed.

This failure, and the set of circumstances that helped create it, could be described as a "perfect storm. Conditions that don't exist all of the time, creating just the right set of events -- warm temperatures, and a small canister -- caused the failure, even though the emissions control systems were working properly.

With the onset of hot weather, we may see a few more situations like this one.

Diagnosing the problem properly in these situations is the key, and checking the vehicles emissions control systems is the first step.

When a vehicle evaluation is

performed at the emissions technical center, the first step that is performed is a function test to verify that the emissions control systems on the vehicle are working properly.

These checks can yield hidden problems that may be overlooked, such as a simple vacuum leak or a hose being disconnected from an air management valve. The tests can reveal a bad check valve or a catalytic converter that is non-functioning. One or more of these emissions control systems that are not working properly or not working at all can cause a vehicle to fail.

The function test helps the repair technician eliminate any problems with the emissions control systems so that he/she can correctly identify the cause of the vehicle's failure.

Once it is established that the emissions control devices are not the problem, vehicle service repairs should be addressed as part of the overall diagnosis. Depending on the vehicle's age and mileage more than one repair may be needed.

A customer hates to be told, later, that the initial repair did not fix the problem and additional repairs will be needed. The goal

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Ozone season begins with introduction of new toll-free air quality hotline

New number offers information to residents statewide.

by Christopher Dann, CDPHE

The summertime ozone season began on Tuesday, June 1, and with it came the introduction the Colorado Department of Public Health and Environment's (CDPHE) new toll-free hotline. The new long-distance number is an effort by CDPHE's Air Pollution Control Division to help keep all Colorado residents informed about current and predicted air quality conditions. The new number is 1-888-484-3247 (1-888-4-THE-AIR).

The new toll-free hotline is in addition to two existing local hotlines that have served the Denver metro area for several years. The local numbers are 303-758-4848 and 303-782-0211. Denver residents should continue to use the two local numbers for general air quality information, including ozone and smoke information. Locally generated calls to the toll-free number will be blocked.

In cooperation with the Regional Air Quality Council, the CDPHE's Air Pollution Control Division will issue Ozone Action Day Alerts throughout the summer for days during which ozone levels are expected to be high.

Originally, Ozone Action Day Alerts only applied to Adams, Arapahoe, Boulder, Broomfield, Denver, Douglas and Jefferson counties in the Denver metro area.

However, the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency recently defined the affected area in Colorado to include portions of Larimer and Weld Counties, including the cities of Fort Collins and Greeley, which now also will be included.

A portion of El Paso County, primarily the area in-and-around Colorado Springs, also is to be included in the Ozone Action Day Alerts although it is not a part of the nine counties declared by EPA to be out of compliance for federal standards for ground-level ozone.

Margie Perkins, the director of the Air Pollution Control Division, said, "We know that Denver's ozone affects areas like Fort Collins and Greeley, and vice-versa. So we will be issuing ozone forecasts this summer that apply to the entire Denver-metropolitan area, the north Front Range and Colorado Springs."

The Air Pollution Control Division also maintains a portion of its Web site that is dedicated to air-quality-related wildfire information (<http://apcd.state.co.us/wildfire.html>). It includes a health-related discussion, answers to frequently asked questions, and links to current smoke forecasts throughout the state and other Web sites dedicated to wildfires.

Individuals also can obtain the

daily air quality advisory on-line at <http://apcd.state.co.us/psi/advisory.phtml>. This advisory will include current and predicted ozone conditions.

Christopher Dann is the public information officer for the Air Pollution Control Division of the Colorado Department of Public Health and Environment.

Proper diagnosis

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should be to fix it right the first time.

The initial diagnosis is important to both the owner and to the repair facility to ensure that their customer is happy with the repair and the vehicle repairs are what are needed to have the vehicle pass the emissions test.

The bottom line is that a thorough diagnosis of the vehicle's problem is needed in every case to ensure the proper repair and a happy owner.

Rick Salazar is an air environmental systems technician for the Colorado Department of Revenue.

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Hey Mikey...

What's up with this "Smog Gas" and what problems, if any, can I expect from it?

Denver, as all large metropolitan areas, has a seasonal blend for gasoline. Actually, four different blends, one for each season. Because of the growing concerns about ground-level ozone over the past couple of years, this summer's blend is required to have a lower volatility rate than in years past. The hope is that it will help ease the Hydrocarbon accumulation in the atmosphere that leads to the formation of ozone pollution during periods of hot, dry weather. This lower volatility blend is required to be used for the period of June 1 to September 1. The only anticipated drivability problems are that some vehicles may experience minor "cold start" issues due to the lower volatile fuel. Even so, this should not cause any undue problems with getting a vehicle to start. As a bonus, some drivers are reporting higher fuel mileage with this blend. Now if we could only get the price of gas to drop back below \$1.50 a gallon...

Hey Mikey... is a periodic column offering suggestions and information from Envirotest Repair Industry Coordinator Mike Knarr. For information, or to suggest a topic, call Mike at (303) 456-7021.