



Bureau of Automotive Repair

STATE OF CALIFORNIA
DEPARTMENT OF CONSUMER AFFAIRS
BUREAU OF AUTOMOTIVE REPAIR

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INFORMATION SHEET ROADSIDE EMISSIONS SURVEY

Why does the Bureau of Automotive Repair (BAR) perform roadside surveys?

The State of California is required to meet certain federal emission reduction standards for ozone-forming pollution generated by motor vehicles. One way to measure the State's progress is to inspect the vehicles while they are in use. The data collected from these roadside surveys help the State develop a profile of the vehicles driven on California's roads. The surveys also provide useful information regarding emissions testing procedures.

Where are roadside surveys performed?

The surveys are performed in the areas of the state with the poorest air quality, including the Central Valley, the San Francisco Bay area, the greater Los Angeles area, Inland Empire, and San Diego area. BAR randomly selects ZIP codes, then identifies suitable sites where it can safely conduct the surveys.

Who performs the roadside surveys?

Roadside surveys are performed by BAR staff. Each team generally consists of three or four individuals, all of whom are ASE certified automotive technicians.

How are the roadside surveys performed?

Vehicles selected for testing are stopped by an officer of the California Highway Patrol. The consumer is greeted by a BAR representative who provides them with information about the survey's purpose and answers any questions they may have. The test usually takes less than 10 minutes.

The surveys themselves are performed in a manner similar to a Smog Check inspection. Each vehicle is subject to a visual inspection in which required emissions control components and systems are identified to confirm that they are connected and functional. Next, the technician performs a functional inspection, which may include checking the malfunction indicator light, the ignition timing, the gas cap, and the Exhaust Recirculation (EGR) system, among others. Finally, the technician performs a tailpipe test, which measures exhaust emissions using a probe inserted into the vehicle's tailpipe. This part of the inspection measures hydrocarbons (HC), carbon monoxide (CO), and oxides of nitrogen (NOx).

How do these surveys affect consumers?

The roadside survey is used strictly to develop a profile of the vehicles on California's roads. Participation in the survey is voluntary. A consumer's vehicle does not "pass" or "fail" the roadside survey emissions test. Therefore, there are no additional repair requirements for owners of high-polluting vehicles. At the conclusion of the inspection, the consumer receives a Vehicle Inspection Report (VIR) detailing the results of the test. This report may **not** be substituted for a vehicle's official Smog Check inspection. However, the VIR does provide important information about the vehicle.