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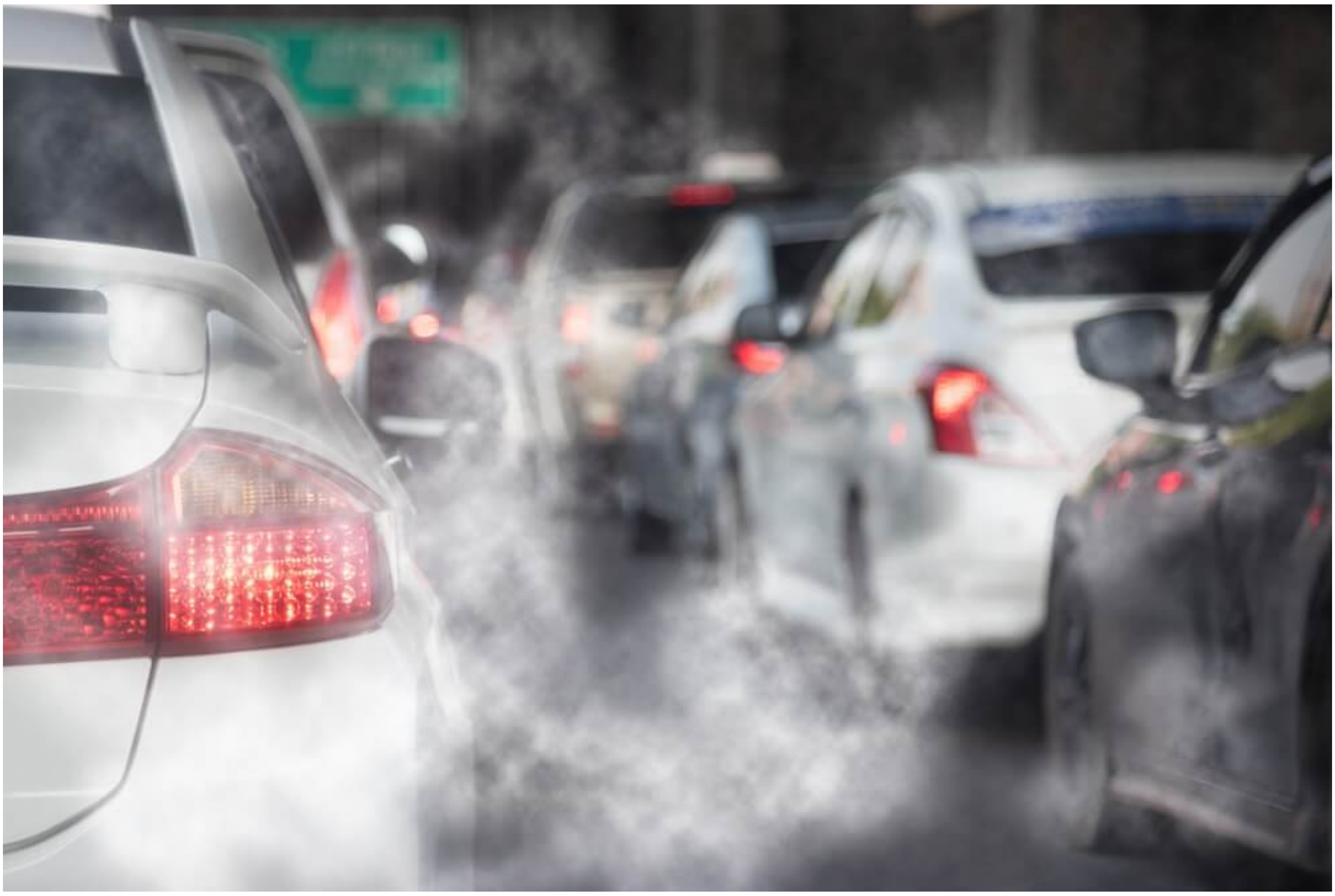
By: TA | AP Brief

EU moves to ease 2035 ban on internal combustion cars



European officials moved to ease their ban on sales of cars with internal combustion engines by 2035, responding to pressure from governments and automakers who argued that the industry needed more flexibility in finding ways to reduce emissions of carbon dioxide and help achieve EU climate goals.

The proposal from the EU's executive commission would change provisions of 2023 legislation requiring average emissions in new cars to equal zero, or a 100% reduction from 2021 levels.

The new proposal would require a 90% emissions reduction. That means in practical terms that most cars would be battery-only but would leave room for some cars with internal combustion engines.

Automakers would have to compensate for the added emissions by using European steel produced by methods that emit less carbon, and through use of climate neutral e-fuels made from renewable electricity and captured carbon dioxide and biofuels made from plants.

EU officials say changing the limit will not affect progress toward making the 27-country bloc's economy climate neutral by 2050.

That means producing only as much carbon dioxide as can be absorbed by forests and oceans or by abatement methods such as storing it underground. CO_2 is the primary greenhouse gas blamed by scientists for climate change.

The less stringent limit would leave room for automakers to continue selling some plug-in hybrids, which have both electric and internal combustion engines and can use the combustion engine to recharge the battery without the need to find a charging station.

The new limit proposal was accompanied by measures to promote European battery production and small electric cars.

The industry is under pressure

The move, which needs approval from member governments and the EU parliament, follows appeals from major carmakers and governments like those of Germany and Italy that are host to major manufacturers and were concerned about the impact on an industry that remains a major employer.

Industry representatives say that charging infrastructure is not being built quickly enough to persuade consumers to switch from gasoline and diesel models to electric cars.

Other factors are also blamed for slowing the increase in demand for electric cars such as the cancelation of purchase subsidies by the German government and higher prices for European-made electric cars.

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At the same time, the industry is under pressure from increasing sales of inexpensive Chinese cars and a car market that remains smaller than before the COVID-19 pandemic.

Sales of battery only cars in Europe rose 26% for the first 10 months of this year compared to the same period last year. Electric-only cars rose to 16% of new car sales.

The easing of the emissions ban would sends “a confusing signal” to automakers and consumers, said environmental lobby Transport & Environment. “This will divert investment away from electrification at a time when European manufacturers urgently need to catch up with Chinese EV-makers.”

Both the EU and the U.S. are moving more slowly in adopting electric cars than China, where battery vehicles were 34% of the market in the third quarter.

Growth of battery cars in China has been fueled by state assistance and ferocious competition among Chinese automakers producing affordable vehicles.