



## VEHICLE EMISSIONS TESTING IN COLORADO

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This *issue brief* discusses the vehicle emissions testing program in Colorado.

### Emissions Testing in Colorado

In 1980, the Colorado General Assembly created the Automobile Inspection and Readjustment Program to achieve better ozone results, reduce vehicle emissions, and meet federal air quality standards. Emissions testing of gas- and diesel-powered vehicles is required when registering or selling vehicles in Boulder, Broomfield, Denver, Douglas, and Jefferson Counties, and in portions of Adams, Arapahoe, Larimer, and Weld Counties. Parts of El Paso County also require diesel vehicles to obtain emissions testing prior to sale. Emissions tests for 1982 or newer motor vehicles are valid for 24 months, and tests for 1981 or older motor vehicles are valid for 12 months.

**Exemptions.** State law provides several exemptions to emissions requirements. New vehicles are exempt from emissions testing requirements for the first seven model years. In addition, when a newer vehicle is sold with 12 months or more left on the original seven year emissions inspection exemption, the vehicle does not require testing at the time of sale. New diesel vehicles are exempt for the first four model years, and all electric vehicles are exempt from emissions testing.

**Waivers.** The state Division of Motor Vehicles can issue waivers for the emissions test requirement in three circumstances:

- *repair waivers:* for 1968 or newer vehicles with \$715 in emissions-related repairs and 1967 or older vehicles with \$75 in emissions-related repairs;
- *economic hardship repair waivers:* if a vehicle has failed at least one emissions test and the owner is receiving need-based financial assistance; or
- *diagnostic waivers:* for vehicles where no additional emissions related repairs would fix the vehicle, and the required parts are no longer available.

**Testing facilities.** Gasoline vehicle owners can receive an emissions test at 18 Air Care Colorado locations that have a total of 97 inspection lanes. There are 36 all-wheel drive testing lanes available in total, with most Colorado locations having two lanes available for all-wheel drive testing. Additionally, two independent test-only stations can inspect gasoline vehicles that are 1981 and older. Air Care Colorado stations do not test diesel vehicles; however, the state has 42 licensed independent diesel emissions testing stations.<sup>1</sup>

**RapidScreen.** RapidScreen is the mobile emissions testing program in Colorado, administered by Air Care Colorado. Instead of testing a vehicle at a testing location, owners drive by a mobile testing unit. Vehicles must drive by a testing unit and receive two clean readings at least 60 days prior to a vehicle's registration renewal month. If the

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<sup>1</sup> Licensed diesel emissions testing stations, [https://www.colorado.gov/pacific/sites/default/files/AP\\_MV\\_E\\_Diesel-Emissions-Testing-Stations.pdf](https://www.colorado.gov/pacific/sites/default/files/AP_MV_E_Diesel-Emissions-Testing-Stations.pdf).

vehicle passed inspection, owners will receive notification on their next renewal registration statement. Motor vehicle owners simply pay the emissions testing fee during their registration renewal. In 2015, 22 mobile testing units were deployed in 117 locations around the emissions areas.

## Required Emissions Testing

Table 1 describes the vehicles that do and do not require testing in Colorado emissions areas.

**Table 1**  
**Required Emissions Testing for Passenger Vehicles in Colorado Emission Areas**

<b>Vehicle Types</b>	<b>Emissions Test Required</b>	<b>Description</b>
<b>New gasoline vehicles</b>	No	Vehicles purchased from a dealer are exempt from testing for the first seven model years.
<b>1982-and-newer gasoline vehicles over seven model years old</b>	Yes	Every two years for \$25.
<b>1981-and-older gasoline vehicles</b>	Yes	Every year for \$15.
<b>Commuters (persons living outside the program area and drive their vehicle at least 90 days of the year in the program area for work or school)</b>	Yes	Vehicle model year rules apply. Must inform county when no longer commuting.
<b>Hybrids</b>	Yes	Same as gasoline vehicles: exempt for the first seven model years, then required every two years.
<b>Collector vehicle model year 1976 to 1985</b>	Varies	If a vehicle was registered as a collector's item prior to Sept. 1, 2009, and the registration has never lapsed or expired, no test is required.
<b>Collector vehicle model years 1975-and-older</b>	No	Must be registered as a "collector's item."
<b>Alternative fuel vehicles</b>	Varies	Same as gasoline vehicles; vehicles that run on the following fuel types require emissions testing: ethanol, natural gas, propane, methanol, bio-diesel, propane/gas, methanol/gas, natural gas/diesel, natural gas/gas, and ethanol gas.
<b>All electric vehicles (with no gas tank or tail pipe emission)</b>	No	If the vehicle is a hybrid, an emissions test may be required (see Hybrids).
<b>New light-duty diesel vehicles</b>	No	New vehicles are exempt from testing for the first four years.
<b>Light duty diesel vehicles 2004 and newer</b>	Yes	Every two years. Cost depends on testing location.
<b>Light duty diesel vehicles 2003 and older</b>	Yes	Every year. Cost depends on testing location.
<b>Selling car/change of ownership</b>	Yes	Seller must provide emissions test; if a vehicle is purchased with 12 or more months left on original seven-year exemption, no test is required at time of sale.

Source: Section 42-4-301, et seq., C.R.S.