



# Clean-Air Cars

Cars and trucks are a major source of smog-forming pollution in Santa Barbara County, and also of greenhouse gases contributing to global climate change. The best thing you can do for our air is to **drive less**—walk, bike, carpool, combine car trips, or take the bus whenever you can. Try telecommuting.

When you do drive in your current vehicle, combine car trips, carpool, keep your car tuned up, and your tire pressures up, and don't top off your tank at the gas station—stop fueling when the pump shuts off.

If you're in the market to buy a vehicle, buying a clean-air car is another good thing to do to help keep our air clean. Whether you are doing web research ahead of time, talking to friends, making some phone calls, or visiting car dealerships, here are some things to consider.

### Look for a new or newer model.

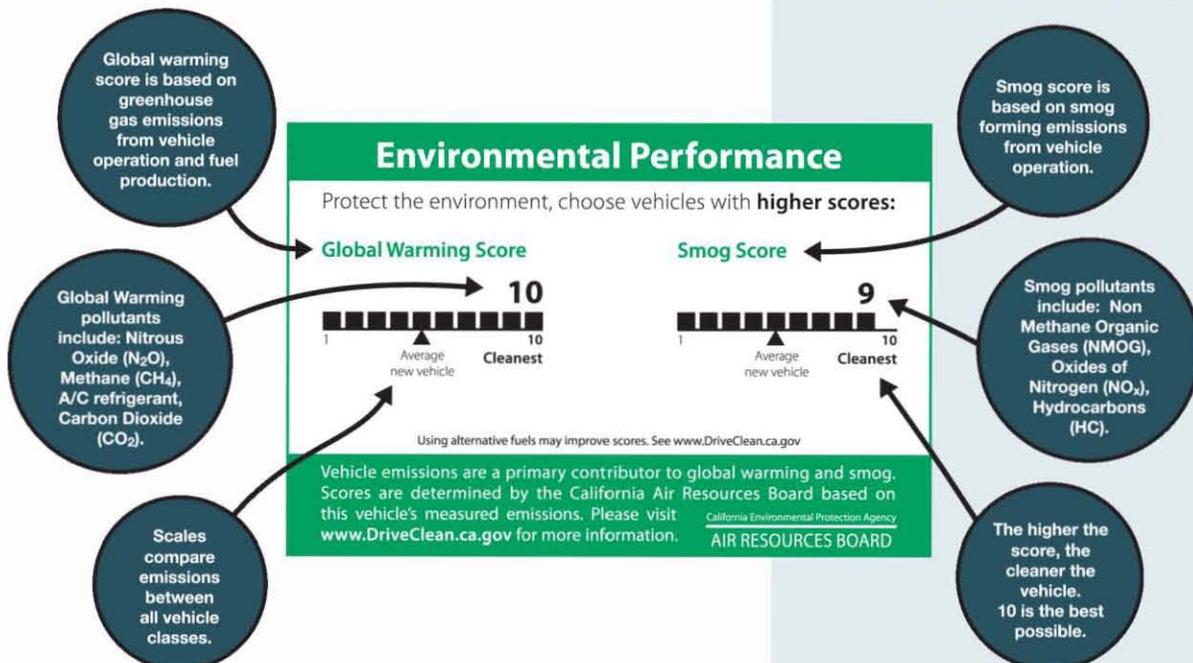
Brand-new models have to meet the strictest standards. If you are looking at a used car, look for one that's six years old or newer (these are exempt from smog-check requirements, too).

### Check the Environmental Performance Label on the car (see below).

## Electric Vehicles (EVs) and EV Infrastructure

In the next few years, automakers are bringing to market many new all-electric (also known as battery-electric) vehicles, and plug-in hybrid electric vehicles. Even accounting for the emissions associated with the electricity for charging the batteries, EVs are considered much cleaner than their gasoline counterparts. The State notes that EV-charging costs typically come in below gasoline costs for gasoline vehicles.

The District is working with the Community Environmental Council and other partners to help establish public charging stations in Santa Barbara County. As many as 50 stations at various locations may be funded. For more information, see [www.cecsb.org/pluginsb](http://www.cecsb.org/pluginsb) or contact Ron Tan at [TanR@sbcapcd.org](mailto:TanR@sbcapcd.org).



## More Things to Consider...

**Ratings for Sport Utility Vehicles (SUVs), minivans, and trucks do not mean the same as ratings for cars.**

These vehicles have not had to meet the same emissions standards as cars in the past.

The standards for some of these vehicle types have been changed, so the newest models will definitely be cleaner than they were. However, an older SUV, truck or minivan will be much more polluting than an older car.

**Look at the fuel efficiency rating as well as the air pollution rating.**

The two don't always go hand in hand, but fuel-efficient cars are often also less polluting. The better the fuel economy, the less production of carbon dioxide, a greenhouse gas that contributes to global climate change (also referred to as global warming).

**Learn more at**  
[www.driveclean.ca.gov](http://www.driveclean.ca.gov)

*The Honda Civic Hybrid pictured below is a gas-electric hybrid model, almost identical in operation to the gasoline-only Civic.*



## Frequently Asked Questions

**Do I have to pay more for a car that's better for our air?** Not necessarily.

Dealers today offer a range of less-polluting, fuel-efficient models. You may be able to find a very low-emission version of your favorite vehicle model. And you will save money by driving a fuel-efficient car.

**Should I get a hybrid, a plug-in hybrid, or a battery-electric vehicle?**

After you determine your budget and the type of vehicle you want, compare by air emissions and fuel efficiency. Hybrids are fuel-efficient, but so are many gas-powered cars. Battery-electric vehicles and plug-in hybrids are good options for our air and our planet.

**I need to buy a bigger vehicle, is there any point trying to find one that's cleaner?**

There are significant differences between vehicles in these categories, and there are some large electric and hybrid vehicles available now. Compare pollution and fuel efficiency ratings.

## True or False?

**The bigger the vehicle, the safer it is.**

Not always true. There are different ways to evaluate the safety of vehicles. For example, some smaller vehicles are safer in something called "crash avoidance," the ability to avoid serious accidents, than bigger vehicles.

## You Can Learn More...

- General Information, and "Today's Air Quality" [www.OurAir.org](http://www.OurAir.org) or (805) 961-8800.
- **U.S. Environmental Protection Agency's Green Vehicle Guide:** [www.epa.gov/greenvehicles](http://www.epa.gov/greenvehicles)  
Look up any car model and compare for emissions ratings and fuel efficiency.
- **California Air Resources Board's Guide to Cleaner Cars:** [www.driveclean.ca.gov](http://www.driveclean.ca.gov)  
The latest on the cleanest cars on the road, including electric models, gas-electric models, and new technology cars that will be available in the future.