



Colorado Department
of Public Health
and Environment

*“To protect and improve
the health and environment
of the people of Colorado.”*

NEWS

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Roadside Vehicle Emissions Testing Returning to Northern Colorado; Eligible “Clean” Cars May Skip Trip to an Emissions Testing Station

DENVER — Roadside vehicle emissions testing, created in Colorado and pioneered in Northern Colorado more than a decade ago, is returning to portions of Larimer and Weld counties, according to the Colorado Department of Public Health and Environment.

Beginning June 1, roadside emissions testing units, called RapidScreen, will begin rotating among 22 pre-approved locations throughout the expanded vehicle emissions testing area in Larimer and Weld counties. They will begin collecting data to be used once the overall program expansion is fully implemented Nov. 1.

“Residents of Larimer and Weld counties should be familiar with these units,” said Paul Tourangeau, director of the department’s Air Pollution Control Division. “The technology was created by scientists at the University of Denver, and in 1995 Greeley was one of the first places where a real-world pilot study was conducted. Roadside testing also was a component of the older, basic emissions testing program in the area for a few years before being retired in 2006.”

RapidScreen units identify eligible “clean” vehicles. If roadside sensors confirm eligibility, vehicle owners will be notified on their vehicle registration renewal cards that they can complete the entire registration process without having to make a trip to a vehicle emissions testing station. Eligible vehicles include most light-duty, 1982-and-newer gasoline-powered cars and trucks.

“Allowing eligible vehicles to skip a visit to a testing station is a real convenience for the motorist,” Tourangeau said.

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The RapidScreen units are heading back to portions of Northern Colorado as part of the planned expansion of the enhanced vehicle emissions program that has been in place in the seven-county Denver-metropolitan area for more than 15 years.

The expansion was mandated by a 2009 law passed by the Colorado Legislature designed to reduce ground-level ozone concentrations. Portions of Larimer and Weld counties, along with the seven Denver-metropolitan area counties, make up the “nonattainment” area for ozone, meaning the area is not complying with federal health-based pollutant standards.

The details of the expansion were approved by the Colorado Air Quality Control Commission after a March 2010 public hearing in Greeley.

RapidScreen equipment analyzes the exhaust from a vehicle as it passes by on the road. It uses infrared and ultraviolet light to measure the concentration of specific pollutants in the exhaust plume. A computer records vehicle speed and acceleration, and a photo of the license plate is taken so eligible vehicles can be matched to registration records. To qualify, vehicles must be well-maintained and license plates must be clean and unobstructed.

RapidScreen is an option for most 1982-and-newer gasoline-powered vehicles registered in the areas of Larimer and Weld counties that will be subject to emissions testing. When an emissions test is required before the annual registration process can be completed, passing readings from the roadside equipment will be noted on the registration renewal card and can be substituted for a trip to a licensed emissions testing station.

“We have screened out tens of thousands of vehicles in the lower seven counties of the nonattainment area in recent years,” Tourangeau said. “We are committed to bringing that same customer convenience to motorists in Larimer and Weld counties.”

Data collection is beginning now, so eligible vehicles can be identified to coincide with full program implementation in November (for vehicles with November 2010 renewal dates). The number of data collection sites will increase substantially in the coming months as more sites are approved and licensed. More than 30 additional sites are under consideration.

It takes two “clean” readings at different sites or on different days for a vehicle to qualify for RapidScreen. The readings must be recorded within a year of – and at least 75 days prior to the end of – the registration month to allow for processing. That means, for November renewals, two clean readings between now and mid-September will be necessary to qualify. Once a motorist receives his/her renewal card from the county in the mail, it's too late.

RapidScreen standards are stricter than those for the more comprehensive four-minute test performed at testing stations.

State officials believe RapidScreen units will collect between 2,000 and 3,000 valid readings per site per day. Initial goals are to identify as much as 20 percent of the eligible vehicle fleet in Larimer and Weld counties, meaning one in five vehicles may not have to visit an Air Care Colorado testing station.

For more information, visit the Air Care Colorado website at <http://www.aircarecolorado.com>.