The Zero Emission Vehicle (ZEV) program is a controversial part of California’s strategy for meeting federal air quality standards. The program has been significantly modified multiple times since it was adopted by the California Air Resources Board in 1990 and is currently being challenged in court.

This report is an independent assessment of the costs and emission benefits of ZEVs and the other low-emission vehicles that manufacturers are allowed to use to meet ZEV program requirements. It reviews the program in the context of the overall strategy for reducing emissions in the greater Los Angeles area and makes recommendations for reform. The analysis and results presented should be of interest to government agencies, environmental groups, and automakers involved in developing policies to improve air quality in California.

This research is based on publicly available research reports, journal articles, newspaper stories, information available on the World Wide Web, and correspondence with experts in the field. It builds on other RAND work on air pollution issues in California. Related publications, all of which are available from RAND at nominal cost, include


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Lloyd Dixon
RAND
1700 Main Street
Santa Monica, CA 90407-2138
TEL: 310.393.0411 x7480
FAX: 310.451.7062
Email: dixon@rand.org