

*Retiring Old Cars: Programs To Save
Gasoline and Reduce Emissions*

July 1992

OTA-E-536

NTIS order #PB92-208164

Retiring Old Cars
PROGRAMS TO SAVE GASOLINE AND REDUCE EMISSIONS



CONGRESS OF THE UNITED STATES OFFICE OF TECHNOLOGY ASSESSMENT

Recommended Citation:

U.S. Congress, Office of Technology Assessment, *Retiring Old Cars: Programs To Save Gasoline and Reduce Emissions, OTA-E-536* (Washington, DC: U.S. Government Printing Office, July 1992).

For sale by the U.S. Government Printing office
Superintendent of Documents, Mail Stop: SSOP, Washington, DC 20402-9328

ISBN 0-16 -037956-3

Foreword

Light-duty vehicles—automobiles and light trucks—account for a large portion of urban air quality problems. For example, they produce about half of urban emissions of reactive organic gases (a precursor to ozone) and the preponderance of carbon monoxide emissions. With regulation of new vehicles above the 90 percent control level for the major pollutants and scheduled to become even stricter in the near future, emissions from older vehicles have drawn increasing attention. Although cars of 1971 or earlier vintage made up only about 3.4 percent of the auto fleet in 1990 and were driven less than 2 percent of the miles, the Environmental Protection Agency estimates they created at least 6 percent of the hydrocarbon emissions, 7.5 percent of the carbon monoxide, and 4.7 percent of the nitrogen oxides. Further, because older cars generally are much less fuel efficient than new ones, they burn a disproportionate share of gasoline and thus are responsible for a similarly large share of the environmental, economic, and national security effects of gasoline use.

The Union Oil Company (Unocal) has demonstrated a successful program to retire 1970 and earlier vintage cars in the Los Angeles area, removing nearly 8,400 old cars by buying them from their owners for \$700 each and scrapping them. The success of this program has spurred national interest: both the House and Senate have expressed interest, and recently the Administration has proposed a program based on awarding pollution credits to companies that participate. The Subcommittee on Energy and Power of the House Committee on Energy and Commerce asked OTA to examine the costs and benefits of vehicle retirement programs. This report responds to the Subcommittee's request.



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