Will Be Similar to Car Safety Inspection

By PAUL ATKINSON

New Orleans and Louisiana residents will in the future—say from one to five years from now—wheel their automobiles in for an air pollution check, much like that pesky one for a safety inspection sticker.

That prediction was made here earlier this week by Charles M. Heinen, chief engineer for the materials laboratories of the Chrysler Corporation. Heinen said studies are being conducted now that would be administered by the Department of Health, Education and Welfare. He said these would be locally run by the states.

Friday, John E. Trygg, head of the State Health Department’s Air Control Section, said, “I frankly believe we are headed in this direction. I don’t know how soon it will come.

HAYD HARD TIME

“We would have a hard time of selling it right now. It depends on what happens to our atmosphere.”

In the meantime, a team of Louisiana State University Medical School students, working in conjunction with Trygg, has looked into air pollution inspection and determined that a program could be instituted in Louisiana at a cost of only 22 cents more, handled through the Department of Safety with the present safety inspection program.

Trygg said this takes into account the possibility of securing two-for-one federal matching funds to aid the inspection program.

The LSU Medical School students’ report calls for a sliding scale to be used as to the age of the car. For instance, a 10-year-old car would not be tested at the same standard as a one-year-old car.

The report suggests a phasing-in of the program. It could be started out first in the more populous urban areas, such as New Orleans and Baton Rouge, and then in the general and third year be put into effect all over the state.

Trygg said the report calls for the incorporation of the air pollution testing devices into motor vehicle inspection lines in some cities such as New Orleans, but there would be a need for building facilities in parishes such as Jefferson and St. Bernard where the safety inspections are done by authorized service stations.

Air pollution inspection would be about five minutes per car.

WON’T SIT STILL

Heinen agreed that the present fastest turnaround time for a complete inspection for air pollution is five minutes, “but we have to get that down to one or two minutes because the people don’t sit still for it any longer.”

But Heinen feels the real problem right now is the cost of such an inspection. “It would cost $55 for a complete inspection and that has to be brought down to $1 or $2,” he explained.

This, of course, is in variance with the LSU students’ hopes that it will cost only 22 cents per car more than is presently spent for a safety inspection sticker, but this is with federal matching funds at a two-for-one ratio.

He sees the present cost of the complete instrumentation for an air pollution check as $30,000.

“What should the tests be for?” Heinen repeated a question. “It ought to be for smoke and carbon monoxide. That is what everyone thinks of in terms of automobile exhaust.

“Smoke is something that is completely controllable. All you have to do is maintain proper practices. That is just plain visual.

“After that, it would depend entirely on the city. In my judgment, checking on hydrocarbons dirty polluters, and don’t they and carbon monoxide in New Orleans would be a complete waste. As a matter of fact, checking for anything but smoke would be a complete waste for this city.”

Heinen added, “But in other cities, such as Los Angeles and Denver, it would be quite desirable to check for hydrocarbons and carbon monoxide as a minimum and probably oxides of nitrogen.”

LOSE FUNDS

He continued, “Recent legislation says that if you don’t have an inspection system acceptable to the air control officer, you lose 10 per cent of your state highway funds. Of course the local officer or the federal officer can agree that maybe you don’t need an inspection station. In that event, you don’t have to have one.”

“I hope that kind of thing comes about. But, unfortunately, in the present climate, that guy (the air control officer) would possibly be up against a class suit or civil suit for not doing his job.”

Heinen feels the first federal-authorized air pollution tests for cars will be for hydrocarbons and carbon monoxide.

“I say that simply because it is easiest to do those two,” said Heinen. “There will have to be a test come out soon to save a lot of people’s faces, so naturally we will go to the simplest.

“There has been some equipment developed here at Michoud by Chrysler as a result of the moon walk that gives some real good possibility for measuring them simultaneously. It is rugged and promises to be inexpensive, though it’s not inexpensive right now.”

FIVE YEARS

Heinen sees such air pollution inspection coming in “one to five; five years at the outside.”

“Why? he repeated a question, “Because the motivating factor is there. It is an excellent state plum. There is a financial plus for the state and a lot of people would be working on it.

“The automobile has been so oversold that people will accept it. They have been told they are dirty polluters, and don’t they want to be good people. All of Orleans would be a complete waste. As a matter of fact, checking for anything but smoke would be a complete waste for this city.”

So, New Orleans motorists, beware, that air pollution inspection line may be nearer than anyone realizes.

Anti-Pollution Check Forecast

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COST ESTIMATE
Reason for this is the great cost of the air pollution checking equipment, estimated to cost from $15,000 to $30,000 by various authorities.

The report was made by students in the LSU Medical School Preventive Medicine and Public Health Class. Participating students were Charles Woodard, Randy Hall, Obie Naul, Van Taliaferro, Norman Anseman, and Doug Chesson.

Trygg said it is possible that such an air pollution inspection program for autos could be instituted in Louisiana without additional legislation, and could be undertaken by the Air Control Commission. “I think we already have the authority,” he contended. “But we haven’t conferred with the Department of Safety as to their role. I agree with the students who feel that the inspection should be handled by the Department of Safety.”

There will be a large number of problems, admits Trygg.

BE UPGRADED
“First, most cars, should they fail the test, can be upgraded to standards through minor tuneup,” said Trygg. “But what do we do about the large numbers of cars which can’t pass?”

“For the good of the community, we ought to take them off the road. But from the individual’s standpoint, the fellow who needs that car to get to work, we could almost be charged with discrimination against him because he can’t afford a new car.”

Trygg said the students’ report calls for annual specifications, but something must be done in that period to see that cars don’t deteriorate. He foresees the possibility of tickets being issued for pollution violations.

“Visual checks can be made by the State Police and tickets issued if the vehicles are smoking considerably,” said Trygg.

Asked if there is also danger in setting up a sliding scale for performance of one-year-old cars vs. those 10 years old, Trygg said, “With the new emission control exhausts that are becoming standard equipment with the 1968, 1969, 1970, and 1971 cars, you will have cars whose air pollution danger is far less than say a 10-year-old car of today. In other words, the standards will be upgraded continuously.”

The students’ report estimated that the elapsed time for an