A Baton Rouge area motorist can be required to spend up to $450 getting a car into compliance with emission standards under the new Clean Air Act just passed by Congress, according to Mike McDaniel, assistant secretary of the Department of Environmental Quality.

Motorists also are likely to see inspection sticker fees rise 50 to 100 percent as more stringent emission tests are run on their automobiles, he said. The small inspection station may even have to give way to larger, centralized facilities.

Also, gas prices will rise as motorists will be required to burn cleaner fuels and large service stations have to add secondary vapor recovery systems.

For area industries, the costs also will be large as they will be forced to install better pollution control systems and otherwise reduce the amount of pollutants they put into the air.

They also will be required by the federal act to pay a minimum of $25 a ton for various types of pollutants they emit into the atmosphere. That money is earmarked for state air permitting and enforcement programs.

Even smaller businesses, such as dry cleaners, printers and paint shops, may feel the added cost of pollution control equipment, depending on how much they emit, McDaniel said in an interview Monday after explaining the local effects of the act to the Ozone Abatement Conference sponsored by the LSU Center for Energy Studies.

The fact that the seven-parish Baton Rouge area is out of compliance with federal standards for the pollutant ozone means this area will be dealt with more stringently than most areas of the state.

The Baton Rouge area will have until the year 2000 to come into compliance, but must take strong steps along the way to show improvement and prevent the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency from using...
strong sanctions, including cuts in federal highway dollars, McDaniel said. Much of the ozone abatement process will be aimed at hydrocarbons and oxides of nitrogen, chemicals that form ozone when mixed and exposed to sunlight.

Ozone is the cause of periodic smog problems in Baton Rouge, and those episodes often are linked to increased respiratory complaints, local physicians have told the Morning Advocate.

Before an industry that would create more than 50 tons of hydrocarbons a year can open or expand in this area, it will have to purchase emissions credits, or use ones it has saved by pollution reduction here, that are 1.2 times the amount of pollution it would generate, McDaniel said.

Vehicles will undergo more stringent emissions testing and, if they pollute too much, the owner can be forced to spend up to $450 over any amount that is covered by the car's warranty to bring it into compliance.

That may mean that some people who don't have the money will have to park their cars, McDaniel said, adding this is one of the portions of the act he finds hardest to accept.

If the state is to maintain its current system of small inspection stations, rather than going to large, centralized stations, it will have to prove to EPA that the individual stations can do at least as good a job in reducing auto emissions, he said.

Industries in the area also will feel the pinch of being forced to reduce toxic emissions, which in some cases are linked to ozone formation and in other cases are not. Louisiana ranks fourth in the country in toxic releases and much of that comes from the industrial corridor between Baton Rouge and New Orleans.

While the impact will be felt from corporate offices to individual motorists, McDaniel hopes the result will be cleaner, more healthful air for the Baton Rouge area.