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Michelle Krebs, veteran automotive-industry authority, joins Edmunds editors, analysts and data experts to provide news and commentary. [\(Full bio\)](#)

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Inside Line



Got CO2? They Definitely Do at the Paris Auto Show

October 06, 2008

By Bill Visnic

PARIS - Yes, there are some who doubt the science of global warming. Not to mention the probable connection of man-made carbon-dioxide (CO2) and rising global temperatures.

But there's no doubt automakers in Europe - and European auto buyers - are deadly serious about CO2 emissions. Particularly following last week's ruling in the European Union that set presumptive "limits" of 120 grams per kilometer of CO2 emissions as a fleet average all automakers selling in Europe must meet beginning in 2012.

At last week's Paris auto show, we lost count of the vehicles that were in some fashion emblazoned not with horsepower figures or even attractive prices, but CO2 emissions. Often those on-vehicle billboards were presented at a size and prominence that could be considered slightly more than eye-catching.

Carbon-dioxide output is related directly to fuel consumption, so the barrage of decals shouting out CO2 performance does indicate fuel economy, too. And we were surprised at the rapt attention paid to the figures.

If not wearing their CO2 emissions figures like racing stripes on a Mustang, almost all vehicles on display here feature a consumer-friendly color-rating system that makes for quick comparison of CO2 figures. The most striking aspect of the labeling system that almost no current models actually can earn an "A" grade. Second: anything earning an "A" or a "B" is invariably quite small - or in some way hybridized:

Here's Europe's rating system of CO2 emissions:

- Less than 100 g/km: A
- 101-120 g/km: B
- 121-140 g/km: C
- 141-160 g/km: D
- 161-200 g/km: E
- 201-250 g/km: F
- More than 250 g/km: G

A vehicle delivering CO2 output in compliance with the EU's 2012 fleet-average limit would earn only a "B" in this system, indicating it's a serious scale.

We set out to get an idea of what sort of vehicles earn what sort of rating. The exercise also gives an idea of what models might be expected to dominate as the mandate of 120 g/km (or less) comes calling in just three years.

A random sample of vehicles on display at the Paris auto show last week, and their CO2 output:

- Smart fortwo 1-liter gasoline: B (105 g/km)
- Peugeot 207 1.6-liter gasoline: E (171 g/km)
- VW Scirocco 2-liter diesel: D (145 g/km)
- Toyota Urban Cruiser 1.4-liter diesel: C (133 g/km)
- Skoda Fabia 1.9-liter diesel: C (129 g/km)



Cadillac SRX 3.6-liter gasoline V6: G (317 g/km)
 Toyota Prius: B (104 g/km)
 Chevrolet Aveo 1.2-liter gasoline: B (116 g/km)
 Seat Altea Freeback 2-liter diesel: E (171 g/km)
 Cadillac BLS 1.9-liter diesel: E (183 g/km)
 Chevrolet Corvette 6.2-liter gasoline: G (317 g/km)
 Lexus GS 450h hybrid: E (180 g/km)
 VW Polo 1.6-liter gasoline: E (176 g/km)

As can be seen, no vehicle above earned an "A" in the CO2 label rating - not even the tiny, two-seat Smart fortwo or the Toyota's Prius and miniscule new iQ. Compact cars with small-displacement diesels earn "C" ratings, which would not comply with the new EU CO2 directive - indicating it will be very difficult to bring a midsize vehicle, even with a "downsized" diesel engine, under the 120 g/km CO2 average sought by the EU.

Most of the German automakers, except for Volkswagen, did not appear anxious to display the CO2 emissions of their wares. Except in the case of new models optimized with various technologies developed specifically to reduce CO2 output. Those technologies range from downsized diesels to so-called "micro-hybrid" systems that turn off the engine at nearly every opportunity, as well as all manner of aerodynamic and rolling-resistance reduction measures (it appears the micro-hybrid componentry, in particular, will be vital as a CO2-cutting measure).

These new CO2-optimized models appeared in proliferation at the Paris show; many enjoyed their debut here. A brief listing, along with their CO2 rating:

VW Passat Variant BlueMotion: B (109 g/km)
 Opel Insignia EcoFlex: C ("less than" 240 g/km)
 Opel Astra EcoFlex: B (119 g/km)
 Audi A4 TDI concept e: B (105 g/km)
 Seat Ibiza EcoMotive: A (98 g/km)
 Seat Leone EcoMotive: B (119 g/km)
 Citroen C1 AirDreame: B (108 g/km)
 BMW 120d EfficientDynamics: C (128 g/km)
 Citroen C4 HyMotion: A (90 g/km)
 VW Golf BlueMotion: A (99 g/km)



Photos by Bill Visnic

- 1 - The CO2-rating label displayed for most vehicles on sale in Europe
- 2 - A C-pillar decal proclaims CO2 performance for one of BMW's range of EfficientDynamics models.
- 3 - Audi's A4 concept e concept car touts a 2012-beating 105 g/km CO2 rating.
- 4 - Rear license plate on VW Golf BlueMotion concept tells it's "A"-grade CO2 story.

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