



News Release

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Changes to AirCare program

Beginning January 1, 2007, AirCare will introduce a more customer-focused program that is designed to target only those vehicles that are more likely to have emission defects and exempt more of the newest vehicles from testing. The new program plan includes enhancements that ensure the AirCare program keeps pace with recent innovations in emissions systems technology and continues to make a clear difference in the air we breathe.

Major changes to AirCare coming into effect next January 1st include a testing exemption for 7 model years, an increase from the 4-model year exemption now in place. As well, AirCare will use the On-board Diagnostic system on 1998 and newer vehicles to test the performance of their emission control system.

These changes will reduce the number of vehicles visiting AirCare stations in 2007, when the program expects to conduct just over 500,000 tests. In comparison, there were 1.2 million tests in 1999. As a result, AirCare will reduce its testing capacity effective January 1st by closing the Burnaby and South Surrey testing stations and reducing the number of test lanes to 32 from 42.

AirCare fees will not increase beyond current levels and reviews are underway to see if further efficiencies can possibly lead to a fee reduction. TransLink's Board of Directors will approve the final program details, including test fees this fall.

Envirotest Canada has signed a new five-year contract with AirCare to provide testing services until December 31, 2011, at which time the AirCare program is expected to wind up.

A key factor in defining the operating parameters of the AirCare program was the Province's decision to provide a seven-year test exemption for new vehicles. As a result, the number of vehicles to be tested will decline each year as new vehicles replace old ones in the fleet. In 1999, the AirCare program tested 1.2 million vehicles. In 2007, only 514,000 vehicles will require testing and that total will fall to 491,000 by 2011.

By law, AirCare must cover its operating and capital costs through test fees and, with the reduction in tests as well as provincial direction to maintain or lower fees, the program is responding by reducing its testing capacity by ten lanes. Accomplishing this involves the closure of the Burnaby and South Surrey testing stations (five lanes) and taking another five lanes out of service from the remaining stations.

About 70 per cent of vehicles registered in Burnaby are tested at other facilities and all Burnaby residents will be no further than 10 kilometres away from another station. The South Surrey station is 13 km from the North Surrey station and 19 km from the Langley station. Its closure will leave White Rock / South Surrey residents more than 10 km from a testing station, but a large number of vehicles (41%) currently registered in White Rock / South Surrey will not require a test due to the extended exemption period. The remainder, 85% of the White Rock / South Surrey vehicles will only require a test every two years.

The outline of the new program was designed from the recommendations received from two independent reviews of AirCare and consultation from the public and AirCare stakeholders.

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Backgrounder below

BACKGROUND

The AirCare program began in September 1992 as a result of projected negative air quality trends in the Lower Fraser Valley and increased population growth. The rationale was based on the fact that light-duty vehicles were the biggest contributor of smog-forming pollutants, and studies determined that a minority of the fleet was contributing the majority of the pollutants - largely because of repairable defects. The program was the first vehicle emissions inspection and maintenance program in Canada.

The AirCare program ensures that the emissions performance of vehicles operating in the Lower Fraser Valley region is maintained as close as possible to original design standards. The program has evolved over the years in response to improving vehicle and testing technologies. There are three distinct AirCare 'eras', commonly referred to as - AirCare I, AirCare II and AirCare III.

AirCare I: 1992 – 1999

Although AirCare was the first vehicle inspection and maintenance program in Canada, there were approximately 35 similar programs already in place in other jurisdictions with air quality problems, mainly in the United States. The AirCare program was funded strictly through testing fees on a cost recovery basis (\$16.05 per test in 1992). Other program features included dynamometer testing for most vehicles, an annual test cycle and an AirCare Certified repair industry.

AirCare II: 1999 – 2006

As motor vehicle emission control technologies advanced, so did the need for a more comprehensive test in order to appropriately evaluate a modern vehicle's emission levels. AirCare II provided the opportunity to upgrade the program's testing hardware and software. A more comprehensive test (IM240) was introduced for 1992 and newer vehicles in January 2001. Because of the more comprehensive nature of the IM240 test, and the improved emissions control technology of late-model vehicles, 1992 and newer vehicles were assigned a biennial test schedule. This schedule recognized the improved durability of the newer vehicle emission control technology of the mid to late 1990s. Other program enhancements of AirCare II included a two-model year exemption, dynamometer test for All Wheel Drive (AWD) and traction control vehicles, transient diesel test and access to web-based test and repair information for Certified Repair technicians.

AirCare III: 2007 – 2011

The next phase of the AirCare program will take advantage of new testing technologies and focus more on vehicles likely to be excess emitters. The most significant change is an increase of the new vehicle exemption from 4 model years to 7 model years. The environmental effect of this exemption increase will result in a 2 to 3% loss of program effectiveness. In terms of test volumes, a 7-model year exemption will reduce the number of inspections by 950,000 over the life of the new contract. As such, the testing infrastructure will need to be reconfigured to reflect this reduced volume.

Program Model Comparison: AirCare II and AirCare III:

| | AirCare II (1999-2006) | AirCare III (2007-2011) |
|-----------------------|---|--|
| Test Fee | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • \$47 for 1992 and newer vehicles • \$23 for 1991 and older vehicles | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Maintain current test fee or possible reduction. To be determined. |
| Test Exemptions | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 4 newest model years | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 7 newest model years • Gas/Electric Hybrid vehicles |
| Test Procedures | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • IM240 test for 1992 and newer vehicles • ASM test for 1991 and older vehicles • D147 for diesel fuelled vehicles | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • OBD test for 1998 and newer vehicles • IM240 test for 1992 - 1997 • ASM test for 1991 and older vehicles • D147 for diesel fuelled vehicles |
| Test Schedule | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Biennial test for 1992 and newer vehicles • Annual test for 1991 and older vehicles | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Biennial test for 1992 and newer vehicles • Annual test for 1991 and older vehicles |
| Test Network | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 12 inspection centres • 42 test lanes | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 10 inspection centres and 32 test lanes due to reduced test volumes. • Burnaby¹ and South Surrey² closed. |
| Test Type Description | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • ASM: The test measures emission levels for HC, CO and NOx while the vehicle is driven at a steady speed of 40 k/hr and again while the engine idles. The driving test may last up to 90 seconds. • IM240: The most advanced dynamometer emissions test currently in use. The test measures emission levels for HC, CO and NOx while the vehicle is driven over a pre-defined series of accelerations, decelerations, and cruise conditions. The test may last up to 240 seconds. • OBD: The On-Board Diagnostic test makes use of a vehicles built-in monitoring system that monitors the emissions and engine components on a continuous basis. The test scans this system to determine if the OBD system has found faults or defects. • D147: This test is specifically designed for diesel-fuelled vehicles. The test measures smoke opacity levels while the vehicle is driven over a pre-defined series of accelerations, decelerations, and cruise conditions. The test may last up to 147 seconds | |

¹ Approximately 70% of the vehicles registered in Burnaby are tested at inspection centres other than the Burnaby inspection centre. 50% of the Burnaby population is located within 10 km of the East Vancouver catchment area and 50% located within the 10 km Coquitlam catchment area.

² The South Surrey inspection centre is located 13 km from the North Surrey inspection centre and 19 km from the Langley inspection centre. Closure of this centre will result in White Rock motorists being located outside the nearest 10 km catchment area of an alternative inspection site. However, 41% of the registered vehicles in White Rock will not require an AirCare test in 2007 as a result of the 7-model year exemption. Also 85% of the vehicles registered in White Rock will be on a biennial test schedule.