

Low-emission Zone in Frankfurt am Main

Since last October all drivers who want to enter Frankfurt am Main, Germany, have to buy a special low-emission sticker for their cars. The city's Low-Emission Zone comprises the area of the so called "Highwayring" – bordered by the highways of A5 in the west, A3 in the South and A661 in the north. The majority of the city's urban area thus now belongs to the zone, where the stickers are obligatory.



This rule applies to the locals as well as the drivers from all over Germany or abroad and forces the drivers of un-eco vehicles (petrol-driven cars without catalyser and diesel-driven vehicles without filter) to leave their cars on the parking lots in the outskirts and use the public transport to get to the city centre.

If not the clean air, then the threatening fine should for sure be a good motivation for the drivers – the penalty for driving in the zone without the green, yellow or red sticker is €40 plus one "black" point into the directory of traffic offenders.

The local authority checks the stickers during the regular traffic controls and does not want to hire any extra staff. In two years, clean air programme will reach its second phase when the vehicles with red stickers will not be allowed to enter the zone any more and the same will go for the yellow sticker owners in the third phase in 2012. From this year on only vehicles with green stickers will be allowed in the city.

Although the strategy is often criticized by ADAC (General German Automobile Association) as disproportional and unnecessary, the city representatives believe it to be the only way to keep the city air breathable and stop the pollution.



About 16.000 vehicles registered in Frankfurt do not meet the pollution criteria and thus don't have a sticker. People commuting to the city for work or school will also be affected by the law. Estimations suppose that there may be about 10.000 owners of unfitting vehicles among them.

The certificate of exemption is only given to the smallest workshops and businesses, that cannot afford to upgrade or innovate their vehicle fleet. There are still a few exceptions from the sticker rule, e.g. the firemen, police and ambulance, the vehicles of the physically disabled or the vintage cars.

The Low-Emission Zones can already be found in 13 German cities – Munich, Augsburg, Oberhausen, Duisburg, Herne, Gelsenkirchen, Essen, Bottrop, Bochum, Mülheim/Ruhr, Recklinghausen und Wuppertal. A sticker bought in one of these cities is valid in any of them.



The reason for these drastic measures is the EU Directive which states that the limit value of 50 Micrograms of fine dust in one cubic meter of air can only be exceeded on 35 days each year. The city council supposes the car access restriction to cause up to 11% reduction of the fine dust contents in the air.

Frankfurt is the city with the worst air pollution in the German state Hessen. The fine dust limits have already been exceeded on 17 days in 2008 and the numbers from the previous years are not very comforting either – 33 days in 2007, 55 days in 2006 and 48 in 2005.

Stuttgart to develop network for light electric vehicles

With oil prices climbing and the threats associated with global warming becoming more apparent, German cities are implementing ways to reduce their carbon emissions. Now the city of Stuttgart will rent ecologically-friendly electric bikes and scooters. After agreeing to a letter of intent with the British firm Ultra Motor, the city of Stuttgart intends to make light electric vehicles (LEVs) available to users around the city, who will then be able to recharge them at power stations hooked into the city's electricity grid.

Stuttgart hopes to have around 1,200 such vehicles ready for rent and covered charging stations located every 150–200 meters around the city this spring. The LEVs can travel up to 60 km before needing a charge – which takes about 15 minutes – and have been especially engineered to travel up steep hills. If all goes as planned, the city hopes to have 12,000 LEVs on the streets in the years to come. The vehicles are already on the streets in parts of India and the US. Ultramotor.com

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