



Clean air in our cities

Informing you about
Low Emission Zones
in North Rhine-Westphalia

Dear reader

Large concentrations of particulate matter and nitrogen oxide are a hazard to human health. Emission limits imposed by the European Union are regularly exceeded in many cities in North Rhine-Westphalia. Motor traffic accounts for a large part of this. We need to significantly reduce the exhaust emissions of cars.

With a view to improving air quality, the State Government is drawing up clean-air plans containing a variety of instruments to cut harmful emissions. One of those instruments is the designation of Low Emission Zones. Basically, this means that vehicles having very high emissions are banned from entering a so-called Umweltzone. This is designed as a first and immediate step towards reducing the high concentration of pollutants in the Low Emission Zones. At the same time, the measures are intended as incentives to modernise vehicle fleets, to make cars 'greener'.

Far from wanting to restrict people's mobility, we are aiming to make motor traffic eco-friendlier and less of a health hazard.

Eckhard Uhlenberg

Minister for Environment, Conservation, Agriculture and
Consumer Protection of the State of North
Rhine-Westphalia

Clean-air policy in North Rhine-Westphalia

In many cities across our state, air pollution from motor traffic poses a serious environment and health problem. Where EU-imposed emission limits for particulate matter and nitrogen oxide are exceeded, the State Government is compelled to prepare clean-air plans. Currently, 23 such plans are in preparation or already in force. The majority of clean-air plans focus on traffic regulation, the objective being a reduction in motorised traffic. This includes the designation of Low Emission Zones and a ban on high-emission vehicles.

What is a Low Emission Zone? When do bans apply?

An LEZ is a pre-designated area where air pollution is deemed to be too high, and which may therefore only be entered by motor vehicles that comply with certain emission standards. In order to travel within an LEZ, cars must display a coloured (red, yellow or green) badge. Cars without such a low-emission sticker are banned from entering the zone. The regulations apply to passenger cars, light commercial vehicles (vans) and heavy-goods vehicles (lorries). Motorcycles and a range of special-use vehicles are exempt.

How do I recognise a Low Emission Zone?

LEZ boundaries are indicated by 'Umwelt-Zone' traffic signs:



With a low emission sticker, the world's your oyster

With a view to easily identifying vehicles entitled to travel in a Low Emission Zone, a nationwide scheme has been introduced by the German government, involving the use of coloured stickers. Passenger cars and commercial vehicles are grouped into four emission categories, depending on the amount of pollutants emitted. The categories mirror the European emission standards. The colour of the sticker identifies the category a vehicle is grouped under.

Because they emit too much NOx and particulates, petrol-driven cars without closed-loop catalytic converters or diesel-powered vehicles will not get low-emission stickers (Emission category 1).

Red stickers are for Euro 2 and retrofit Euro 1 diesel cars (Emission category 2)

Yellow stickers are for Euro 3 diesel cars and Euro 2 diesel cars with retrofit particulate filters (Emission category 3).

Green stickers are for vehicles that have petrol engines and closed-loop catalytic converters (with the exception of some older models) and diesel-powered cars which either meet the Euro 4 emission standard or comply with Euro 3 and have the appropriate filter fitted. (Emission category 4)




An additional sign below the traffic sign shows the coloured badges required for entering the zone.

Timeline for the introduction of Low Emission Zones

North Rhine-Westphalia's first LEZ was established in Cologne on 1 January, 2008. More zones are expected to be designated during 2008 in the Ruhr valley and several cities elsewhere.

Which emission category does my car fall under?

Check the relevant codes in your registration certificate and compare them to the table illustrated below. If necessary, contact your local Stadt or Kreis motor vehicle registry for more details.

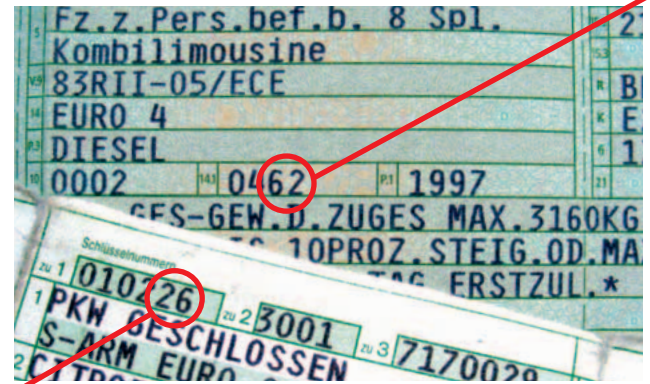
Emission category Badge colour	Allocated codes			
	Passenger cars		Commercial vehicles	
	Petrol Gas (LPG, CNG) Ethanol fuel	Diesel, Bio-diesel	Petrol Gas (LPG, CNG) Ethanol fuel	Diesel, Bio-diesel
 Emission category 2 Red sticker	–	25 to 29, 35, 41, 71	–	20 to 22, 33, 43, 53, 60, 61
 Emission category 3 Yellow sticker	–	30, 31, 36, 37, 42, 44 to 52, 72	–	34, 44, 54, 70, 71
 Emission category 4 Green sticker	01, 02, 14, 16, 18 to 70, 71 to 75, 77	32, 33, 38, 39, 43, 53 to 70, 73 to 75, PM 5	30 to 55 60, 61, 70, 71, 80, 81, 83, 84, 90, 91	35, 45, 55, 80, 81, 83, 84, 90, 91

Gas-powered cars (LPG or CNG)

If the code from your registration certificate is not listed, your car falls under Emission Category 1 and is not entitled to a low-emission badge.

Emission Category Code

Registration Certificate issued on or after 1 October, 2005



Registration Certificate issued prior to 1 October, 2005

Not entitled to a low-emission sticker. Now what?

Many vehicles can be retrofitted with catalytic converters (petrol engines) or particle filters (diesel engines) and will then get a sticker..

There is a tax break - currently at 330 euros - for retrofitting a diesel particulate filter. Please note that any retrofit entitling you to a low emission sticker must be entered on the registration certificate by motor vehicle registry officers.





Low emission stickers are valid throughout the Federal Republic of Germany

Who issues the stickers?

Low emission stickers can be obtained from Kreis or Stadt motor vehicle registries, testing stations run by TÜV, DEKRA or similar organisations, and garages authorised to perform emission tests (more than 30000 in NRW). The sticker will cost 5 euros.

Do I need a sticker for my car?

If you are going to drive in an Umwelt-Zone in North Rhine-Westphalia or any other German state, you need a valid low-emission sticker. Failure to display the appropriate sticker can result in a € 40 fine and a demerit point.

Are there exemptions or a period of grace?

Residents and businesses can apply for a certificate of temporary exemption. Local motor vehicle registries will be happy to provide more details.

Where can I get information on financial subsidies for particle filters?

Visit the North Rhine-Westphalia Treasury's website, www.fm.nrw.de. Go to 'Infos für Steuerzahler' and 'Steuerförderung für Diesel-Pkw mit Russfilter'. If you are buying a low-emission light commercial vehicle or a lorry, you can get a low-interest loan. Go to www.kfw.de for more details.

Where can I get additional information of a general nature?

General and detailed info on clean-air schemes, low-emission zones and stickers, environment and health can be obtained from a website run by the NRW Ministry of the Environment, www.umweltzonen.nrw.de. To learn more about low-emission zones, contact the regional State Government Offices (Bezirksregierungen), local motor vehicle registries, Chambers of Crafts or Chambers of Commerce.

Published by:

Ministry of the Environment, Conservation, Agriculture and Consumer Protection of the German state of North Rhine-Westphalia, Public Relations Branch, D-40190 Düsseldorf

Content editing:
Unit V-3, 'Air Quality'

Design:
Projekt-PR Gesellschaft für Öffentlichkeitsarbeit mbh,
www.projekt-pr.de

Pictures:
Photoalto, Caro/Sorge, Stefan Kiefer, Uwe Schmid-Fotografie, Rainer Raffalski, Jahreszeiten Verlag/Julia

Printed by
dp Moser

Current to:
January, 2008