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Emergency Air Pollution Reduction Plan Announced For Mexico City

by John Neagle

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An emergency air pollution reduction plan was announced Sept. 29 by City Hall in the capital. The new law will obligate drivers to keep their cars off Mexico City streets one day each week. Government officials say the plan will reduce the quantity of pollutants spewed into the air by 3,000 tons per day. Taxis, buses, some delivery vehicles, emergency vehicles and government and military vehicles will be exempted. The plan envisages taking 460,000 private cars off the streets on a daily basis. Each automobile will carry a color-coded sticker to indicate which day it must not be found on the streets. Penalties consist of fines ranging from the equivalent of 20 to 30 days of the minimum wage. The law will go into effect in November and continue until February next year, covering the cold weather months in which pollution is most harmful. Some 3 million vehicles are found on capital city streets every day. Automotive exhaust and emissions from an estimated 35,000 factories in the city are often trapped by thermal inversion during cold weather. Last winter, authorities closed schools down for a month to preserve students' health. Illnesses attributed to the pollution include bronchopulmonary ailments, gastrointestinal complaints, conjunctivitis, nausea, headaches, tachycardia, kidney diseases, hepatitis and diseases of the nervous system. (Basic data from AFP, 09/30/89)

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