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Colombia: Government Implements Plan To Reduce Gasoline Consumption

by Barbara Khol
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On April 10, government officials announced unprecedented measures to reduce gasoline consumption. Effective April 15, drivers of private passenger cars with registration plates ending in even numbers are permitted to use their vehicles on even-numbered days, and cars bearing plates ending in odd numbers are permitted to function on odd numbered days. Public Works Minister Juan Felipe Gaviria and Mines and Energy Minister Luis Fernando Vergara said the temporary restrictions on vehicle use were intended to reduce demand. The ministers and other officials said the measures were necessary to compensate for output cutbacks resulting from rebel sabotage of oil pipelines and refining facilities. Andres Restrepo, president of the state-run oil company ECOPETROL, said a strike by oil workers launched over a month ago cut daily output from 92,000 to 58,000 barrels of crude per day. He added that the strike obligated the government to increase imports by more than 15,000 bpd. The new decree will be enforced on all days of the week, including holidays, and pertains to government as well as private vehicles. Fuel sales are also subject to restrictions; vendors are authorized to sell gasoline only to drivers of vehicles bearing appropriate plates. Violators will be prevented from using their vehicles for 24 hours. Exemptions include school buses, and vehicles used in public health services, street and aqueduct maintenance, sewage treatment, electricity, and mass transit. (Basic data from EFE, 04/10/91)

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