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Big rig trucks may be subject to fuel efficiency standards



The Environmental Protection Agency and the Department of Transportation proposed today a set of fuel standards for big huge trucks and vans -- from big rigs to school buses. Marketplace's Sarah Gardener takes a look at why it took 35 years for these rules to come.

A man walks in front of a row of semi-trucks at the Broadway Fuel Stop in Hardin, Mont. (Stephen Brashear/Getty Images)

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TEXT OF STORY

KAI RYSSDAL: You know all those big rigs you share the highway with? They are finally going to have to meet fuel efficiency standards, just like cars have had to do for 35 years or so. From the Marketplace Sustainability Desk, Sarah Gardner explains why it took so long.

SARAH GARDNER: Federal officials today announced plans to force long-haul trucks, school buses and big pick-ups [to cut fuel consumption by 10 to 20 percent](#). The changes would start in the 2014 model year.

Transportation Secretary Ray LaHood.

RAY LAHOOD: It will reduce our reliance on oil, strengthen our energy security and mitigate climate change.

The government has dictated fuel economy standards for cars since Gerald Ford was president. But freight trucks were exempted, only partly because they play such a key role in national commerce.

Dan Becker is at the Center for Auto Safety.

DAN BECKER: The trucking industry and the auto industry in general have been very powerful and have resisted change.

Experts say advances in hybrid technology and clean diesel have softened some of that resistance. At the same time, corporate awareness of global warming has risen. Many companies, including UPS, already use some short-haul trucks fueled by cleaner natural gas.

I'm Sarah Gardner for Marketplace.