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Even bad cars go to heaven sometimes

By: Paul Williamson

Updated: August 22, 2008

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A collection of 1994 Honda Accords: good cars in their day, but driving one today can make you a bigger polluter than your new-car-driving neighbour. (Wieck Photo Database Archives)

Do good cars go to heaven? According to Clean Air Foundation's signature Car Heaven program, there is no such thing as a good car, well, at least not if it was built prior to 1995.

After recent consultation with Environment Canada, the foundation has released information stating that vehicles manufactured prior to 1995 emit 19 times more smog-forming emissions than vehicles built after 2003.

"This truly is a staggering fact," said Ersilia Serafini, Executive Director of the Clean Air Foundation, in a release. "Our hope is that Canadians will hear this shocking statistic and really take a close look at the vehicle they are driving and the impact it is having on our environment. If Canadians are driving cars made before 1995, it's time to make a change and find a more environmentally-friendly means of transportation."

On that note Clean Air Foundation is urging Canadians to take advantage of the Car Heaven program and get rewarded for permanently retiring their older, higher-polluting vehicles. The program is designed to not only make it easy, but also reward Canadians for donating their old clunkers.

The benefits include a wide range of incentives for participants, including a free vehicle tow, a charitable tax receipt, \$750 towards a new General Motors vehicle, a free transit pass, and even rebates on the purchase of bicycles. All participants are also guaranteed that their car will be recycled in an environmentally responsible manner.

The difference in emissions from older cars to newer cars means that one-third of the vehicles driven in Canada account for two-thirds of the smog created.

While the Car Heaven program is targeting all vehicles built prior to 1995, there is no mandate to have classic, collector or special interest cars scrapped, in fact, the program has been in consultation with associations that represent the old car hobby, ensuring that if a collector vehicle is donated to the program it is recognized as such and carefully scrutinized.

Since 2000, Car Heaven has retired and responsibly recycled more than 80,000 old vehicles, preventing over 4,300 tonnes of smog-forming and over 41,000 tonnes of carbon monoxide emissions. In addition, the program has raised over \$3 million for Canadian charities.

Due to the program's success, the Canadian government recently chose Clean Air Foundation to run a national vehicle scrappage program across the country starting January 2009 and running until March 2011.

The Car Heaven program has had a range of partners in both the public and private sector. This

year, partners include General Motors, Imperial Oil Foundation, the Government of Ontario and the Automotive Recyclers. There is also a benevolent element to the program, and to date, Canadians who have participated in the program have generated more than \$3 million in donations to charitable organizations.

While emissions from auto tailpipes have long been blamed for warming the planet, the flatulence from livestock, including cattle, sheep and goats, contribute more to global warming than the entire transportation sector combined, according to the United Nations Food and Agriculture Organization.

Which leads us to wonder when someone will put together a program to retire omnivores born before 1995...

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