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Air conditioning freezes fuel savings for hybrid vehicles

As the warmer weather arrives in the UK, hybrid vehicle owners could face a dip in fuel economy this summer. Research conducted by Emissions Analytics has shown that air conditioning systems have a bigger impact on the fuel economy for hybrid vehicles, compared to petrol and diesel models.

Testing carried out at the company's facility in Los Angeles has found that driving a hybrid passenger car with the air conditioning turned fully on reduces MPG by an average of 6.1 percent – almost double the average reduction recorded in petrol engine cars which amounted to 3.8 per cent. In comparison, the average MPG in diesel cars was found to be reduced by 4.6 per cent.

The data, compiled by comparing over 100 passenger cars, also highlights the impact of using air conditioning on fuel economy during motorway and city driving. The tests found that hybrid models perform worst in both conditions, with air conditioning on average reducing MPG by as much as 9.3 per cent when driven in the city and 2.8 per cent on the motorway.

Air conditioning was found to have the least impact on petrol engine cars in both test scenarios, as MPG was reduced by 5.1 per cent during the city drive and 2.7 per cent on the motorway drive. Again diesel engines were found to be somewhere in the middle, with results showing an average reduction in MPG of 6.4 per cent in the city, compared to on a motorway which amounted to a reduction of 3.3 per cent.

Commenting on the findings, Nick Molden, Founder and CEO of Emissions Analytics said: "While these results were based on tests conducted in the United States where the climate tends to be warmer and there is therefore larger requirement for air conditioning, our findings can still be applied by consumers in the UK when looking for their next car."

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Notes to Editors

Emissions Analytics provides on-road vehicle emissions measurement and analysis. Their bespoke services include benchmark tests, product evaluation and real-world running costs. They measure with precision all regulated pollutants, including CO, CO₂, NO, NO₂, total hydrocarbons and particulate matter.

Emissions Analytics' pioneering role as supplier to What Car's break-through True MPG scheme has seen it test over 400 models and makes of passenger cars, providing consumers with an easy and reliable way to assess real-world fuel economy.

As experts in vehicle emissions and fuel consumption, Emissions Analytics supports a range of commercial and publicly-funded organisations. It is currently in partnership with Imperial College, London, studying urban emissions for transport planning and policy.

For more information please contact Matt Sanger at Automotive PR 020 7952 1079 or msanger@automotivepr.com.

