

Cars Neither "Green" Nor "Clean" -- New Norway Rules

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NO car can be "green," "clean" or "environmentally friendly," according to some of the world's strictest advertising guidelines set to enter into force in Norway next month.

"Cars cannot do anything good for the environment except less damage than others," Bente Oeverli, a senior official at the office of the state-run Consumer Ombudsman, told Reuters on Thursday.

Carmakers such as Toyota, General Motor's Opel, Mitsubishi, Peugeot Citroen, Saab and Suzuki had all used phrases this year in advertisements that the watchdog judged misleading, she said.

One Toyota advertisement for a Prius, for instance, described the gasoline-electric hybrid as "the world's most environmentally friendly car."

"If someone says their car is more 'green' or 'environmentally friendly' than others then they would have to be able to document it in every aspect from production, to emissions, to energy use, to recycling," she said.

"In practice that can't be done," she said of tougher guidelines entering into force in Norway from October 15.



The guidelines distributed to carmakers said: "We ask that ... phrases such as 'environmentally friendly', 'green', 'clean', 'environmental car', 'natural' or similar descriptions not be used in marketing cars."

Carmakers would risk fines if they failed to drop the words. Oeverli said she did not know of other countries going so far in cracking down on cars and the environment.

UTMOST RESPECT?

In one ruling abroad, for instance, Britain's advertising watchdog said that Volvo advertisements should not repeat a claim that its C30 car was "designed with the utmost respect for the environment in mind."

Oeverli said carmakers, who are making huge investments in cleaning up emissions, seemed happy to get clearer rules about advertising. In the future in Norway, they can only give out information that can be firmly documented.

That means that even phrases such as "Car X has low emissions of carbon dioxide," the main greenhouse gas released by burning oil, should be avoided.

The watchdog argued that mentioning carbon dioxide alone could mislead buyers into believing that the car also had low emissions of toxic nitrous oxide or other polluting particles.

Transport, mainly trucks and cars, accounts for about a fifth of all greenhouse gas emissions from human sources, and is widely blamed for stoking a warming that could bring more floods, desertification, heat-waves and rising seas.

Reported by Mr. Alister Doyle -- Oslo