

Sulfur Smell From Exhaust

Owners of 1999 and 2000 Subaru models may complain of a sulfur-like odor from the exhaust system. Sulfur is a natural component of crude oil from which gasoline is made. The amount of sulfur content in gasoline can be decreased through the refining process. Sulfur in gasoline can diminish the effectiveness of a vehicle's catalytic converter, thus increasing the level of oxides of nitrogen (NO_x) at the tailpipe.

For the 2000 model year, Subaru of America now produces a 50-state low emission vehicle (LEV)—meaning the car is approved for use in all 50 states and meets California emissions regulations. The state of California mandates that the sulfur content of gasoline in California (Phase II RFG) is not to exceed 30 parts per million (ppm) on an average (with an 80 ppm cap) as part of their cleaner burning gasoline legislation. Sulfur levels significantly higher than 30 ppm could present performance concerns.

The 2000 Legacy Outback owner's manual states:

If your vehicle is a California-certified low emission vehicle (LEV) as indicated on the underhood tune-up label, it is designed to optimize engine and emission control performance with gasoline that meets California low sulfur specifications. Your vehicle will operate on gasoline meeting Federal specifications.

Testing conducted during an Alliance of Automobile Manufacturers gasoline survey indicates that sulfur levels in the gasoline supplies located in other areas of the country are significantly higher than the 30-80 ppm California guidelines. Due to the fact that all 2000 model year Subaru vehicles are designed to run on the low sulfur, California-spec gasolines, high sulfur content may cause engine performance concerns and sulfur odor complaints. Other vehicle manufacturers are also experiencing similar concerns.