

Car and motorbike drivers as well as machinery owners have been urged to be part of solutions to air pollution by servicing their vehicles, avoiding unnecessary trips, turning off their engines when stationary and buying electric and hybrid vehicles.

The call was made this Thursday in Kigali during the launch of a campaign in bid to reduce greenhouse gas emissions causing climate change and to improve the quality of air we breathe.

The campaign is a joint initiative of the Ministry of Environment through the Rwanda Environment Management Authority (REMA), Rwanda Standards Board (RSB), Rwanda Space Agency (RSA) and Rwanda National Police (RNP).

It targets owners of fossil-fuel powered vehicles and machines using petroleum products to properly service and keep them in good working conditions to reduce emissions, which contribute to global warming.

It also aims to urge owners of automobiles to use fuels that comply with national standards, in a bid to reduce greenhouse gas emissions to preserve air quality for all.

During the campaign, mobile emissions testing will be conducted in the City of Kigali as well as Huye, Rwanamagana, Musanze and Rubavu districts.

The public will also be engaged through radio and TV talk shows to be encouraged to share their personal efforts to fight air-pollution.

Air pollution is the leading environmental threat to human health. Today 90% of people globally breathe polluted air and approximately 7 million of people die from air pollution related causes every year.

The Deputy Director General for REMA, Faustin Munyazikwiye said that most of pollutants are generated by petrol and diesel powered vehicles and machines.

“Rwanda has built a nationwide monitoring system that provides real-time data on the quality of the air at 23 sites across the country. The system highlights the dominant air pollutants responsible for air quality degradation, and most of those pollutants are related to vehicular emissions and machines using fossil-fuel like petrol and diesel,” said Munyazikwiye.

He urged the public, where possible, to shift from fossil-fuel vehicles to electric

ones.

"It is everyone's responsibility to regularly service their vehicles, use fuel complying with rational standards, and shift from fossil-fuel powered vehicles to electric vehicle where possible, to ensure clean air for all," Munyazikwiye added.

He pointed out that the number of vehicles on Rwanda's roads is expected to double by 2030 and so pollution, climate impacts as well as societal costs linked to congestion and health will also rise if nothing is done now.

A study released by REMA in 2017 indicated that vehicle emissions are the biggest contributor to poor air quality in Rwanda's cities.

On his part, Commissioner of Police (CP) John Bosco Kabera, the RNP spokesperson, said that emissions inspection and testing is an obligation to all vehicles in Rwanda to prevent air pollution.

"The contribution of vehicles to the city's ambient air pollution cannot be ignored. All motor-vehicles in Rwanda are required to undergo emissions inspection and testing at the Motor Vehicle Inspection Center. Any vehicle that does not meet applicable emissions standards is not authorized to operate in Rwanda," said CP Kabera.

The Traffic Police, he added, also has mobile hand-held vehicle emissions inspection equipment for on-the-spot emission checks.

In 2019 and 2020, Rwanda Standard Board published standards for air quality and emissions limit for road vehicles as well as automotive fuels equivalent to euro 4.

Those standards serve as bench marks for the control of air pollution, testing and inspection of vehicle emissions with a view to protecting the environment, health and safety of the Rwandan population.

Under the Ministerial Order on air pollution and emissions, the owner or operator of a machine using petroleum products must service the machine and maintain it in line with the best technical practices to keep it within the authorized air pollutants emissions limits.

Similarly, under the law of preservation of air quality and prevention of air pollution in Rwanda, any person owning any means of transport of people and goods which is

an emission source must control the production and emission of air pollutants.