

For a Healthy California, Keep Diesel Rules on Track



The California Air Resources Board (ARB) is preparing to temporarily ease the rules for diesel trucks and off-road equipment, but it is essential to keep in place the public health protections of these rules and to stay on track toward cleaner air for all Californians. Since 2000, ARB has been implementing rules to clean up diesel pollution from existing diesel-powered engines in buses, garbage trucks, emergency generators, and other sources, to reduce the risk of cancer and other illnesses. It was not until more recent years that the state took long-awaited action to reduce toxic diesel pollution from the largest emitters: off-road equipment and trucks.. The program has had many successes – the days of soot-spewing buses are mostly behind us – but too much pollution remains. California will not achieve the clean air that will protect public health and California’s economy without adequate efforts that steadily clean up the state’s diesel trucks and off-road equipment.

Air pollution remains a serious threat to California’s public health and economy.

Every day, three times as many Californians die prematurely from the effects of particulate air pollution than in traffic accidents.¹ The most recent estimate, based on a peer-reviewed study which followed nearly half a million people across the country for over 18 years², is that fine particulate, kills 9,200 Californians each year.³

The health problems caused by air pollution – premature death, illness, and related missed school and work days – are also a drag on California’s economy, costing billions of dollars per year in health care cost and lost productivity. On the other hand, according to the US EPA, every dollar spent to clean up diesel engines saves up to \$13 in health costs.⁴

Diesel pollution raises the risk of heart and lung disease, asthma, cancer, and early death.

Diesel pollution not only contains toxic particulates, but contains smog-forming nitrogen oxides and more than 40 other toxic chemicals. Hundreds of peer-reviewed studies from around the world have documented the

¹ California Office of Traffic Safety. 2009. *California Traffic Safety Report Card*. Available at: http://www.ots.ca.gov/OTS_and_Traffic_Safety/Report_Card.asp

² Krewski D, Jerrett M, Burnett RT, Ma R, Hughes E, Shi Y, Turner MC, Pope CA III, Thurston G, Calle EE, Thun MJ. 2009. *Extended Follow-Up and Spatial Analysis of the American Cancer Society Study Linking Particulate Air Pollution and Mortality*. HEI Research Report 140. Health Effects Institute, Boston, MA.

³ California Air Resources Board. 2010. *Estimate of Premature Deaths Associated with Fine Particulate Pollution (PM2.5) in California Using U.S. Environmental Protection Agency Methodology*. California Environmental Protection Agency, Sacramento CA.

⁴ United States Environmental Protection Agency. 2010. “National Clean Diesel Campaign.” Available at: <http://www.epa.gov/diesel/>.

health hazards of long-term exposure to diesel exhaust, particulate pollution and smog, including asthma and heart attacks, stunted lung growth in children, birth defects, more emergency room visits and higher death rates. At greatest risk are children, the elderly, people with asthma or other lung illnesses and those who live in congested industrial areas including near ports or rail yards.

ARB has studied the communities near rail yards and the ports of Los Angeles, Long Beach and Oakland and has found that the residents have an elevated cancer risk. In addition, studies of workers exposed to diesel pollution have shown increased risk of cancer.

Any changes to the On-Road Truck or Off-Road Equipment Rules should protect public health and keep California on a path to clean air.

➤ **Off-road equipment must do its fair share.**

With nearly 150,000 off-road diesel engines in California, off-road equipment is a major source of air pollution. Federal standards for new off-road engines have lagged behind those for on-road diesel trucks – the first off-road standards were not set until 1996. As a result, per unit of work, off-road engines pollute more than trucks with the same years of service. In addition, some off-road equipment lasts for decades, meaning it will take many years before dirty old equipment is retired. California must not create a loophole that allows some off-road diesel equipment to continue to pollute, while other diesel engine owners are doing their part to clean the air.

➤ **Lower emissions during a recession are not permanent.**

Because of the slow economy, ARB recently lowered its estimate of overall diesel emissions and plans to loosen the rules to reflect the slowdown. But these recession-driven emission reductions won't last. As the economy recovers, older equipment now sitting idle will start polluting again. Short-term changes to the rules must be limited to make sure we continue to make progress toward longer-lasting solutions such as pollution control retrofits and engine upgrades.

➤ **Revised estimates should not be a license to pollute more.**

ARB not only updated pollution estimates to reflect the economic downturn, but changed *how* they calculate off-road emissions. These changes do not represent real reductions in emissions, but rather a more accurate accounting of what is actually coming out of the tailpipe. *Simply put, the air did not get any cleaner from ARB's revised calculations.* California needs real reductions from all sources of diesel pollution, including off-road equipment.

California is on the right track.

Diesel pollution is preventable. Opponents of the rules argue that clean air is more expensive than allowing aging diesel engines to continue to pump soot into our lungs. But every year we wait, thousands more Californians will pay a far higher price with both their health and their pocket book. We have the tools today to eliminate this deadly pollution, and we can't afford to wait.

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