

WEC FACT SHEET

DOWN AND DIRTY DIESEL EXHAUST

- Diesel exhaust is emitted by trucks, school buses, older cars and off-road construction and industrial equipment with engines running on diesel fuel. All told, there are 13 million diesel-powered vehicles and machines in the U.S.¹
- Diesel exhaust contains more than 40 chemicals that are considered toxic air contaminants. Many of these toxics are suspected to cause cancer.²

HEALTH IMPACTS IN NEW JERSEY AND THE U.S.

- In 1999 alone, nearly 900 New Jersey residents died prematurely, another 1,400 suffered non-fatal heart attacks, and some 108,000 lost work days – all because of exposure to toxic diesel exhaust.³
- During the same year, New Jersey saw 14,000 hospitalizations and 500 emergency room visits for asthma, 1,300 cases of acute bronchitis, 26,000 cases of upper-respiratory and lower-respiratory distress.⁴
- Diesel exhaust worsens the symptoms of asthma and can trigger an asthma attack in someone who never has had asthma.⁵
- Diesel exhaust also worsens symptoms for people with chronic obstructive pulmonary disease, such as chronic bronchitis and emphysema.⁶
- Exposure to diesel exhaust causes more deaths across the country each year than drunk driving, HIV/AIDS, or homicides with firearms.⁷
- More than one million workers are exposed to diesel exhaust and face potentially negative health effects, ranging from headaches and nausea to cancer and respiratory disease. Workers at risk include miners, bridge and tunnel workers, railroad workers, loading dock workers, truck and bus drivers, material handling machine operators, farm workers, longshoring employees, and auto, truck and bus maintenance garage workers.⁸

DIESEL EXHAUST AND ENVIRONMENTAL JUSTICE

- More African-Americans and Latinos than whites are exposed to diesel pollution since more people of color live in urban areas where there are more diesel emissions and where there is more traffic congestion.⁹
- People of color are also more likely than whites to develop asthma, heart attacks and some cancers linked to diesel exhaust.

- Asthma is now the most common chronic ailment in all children, regardless of race, and the main cause of school absenteeism. But Black and Latino children are more likely than white children to have asthma and a higher mortality rate from asthma.¹⁰

Exposure to diesel exhaust is expensive, costing us our health, education and jobs. This is too high of a price to pay because of where we live, go to school, work, our race and ethnicity, or old technology.

FOR MORE INFORMATION ON HOW YOU CAN GET INVOLVED AND HELP REDUCE DIESEL, CONTACT VALORIE CAFFEE, WEC DIRECTOR OF ORGANIZING AT (609) 695-7100, EXT. 308.

¹ "Diesel and Health in America: The Lingering Threat," Clean Air Task Force (February 2005).

² "Diesel Exhaust and Air Pollution," American Lung Association (April 2000).

³ "Diesel & Health in America: Diesel Soot Health Impacts," a report published by the Clean Air Task Force (February 2005,).

⁴ Ibid.

⁵ Pandya, Robert, et. al., "Diesel Exhaust and Asthma: Hypothesis and Molecular Mechanisms of Action". Environmental Health Perspectives Supplements, Volume 110, Number 1, February, 2002.

⁶ Dockery, D.W., et. al., "An Association Between Air Pollution and Mortality in Six U.S. Cities," New England Journal of Medicine, 329:1753-59, 1993. Pope III, C.A., et al., "Particulate Air Pollution as a Prospective Study of U.S. Adults," American Journal of Respiratory Critical Care Medicine, 151:669-674, 1995; Shprentz, D., "Breathtaking: Premature Mortality Due to Particulate Air Pollution in 239 American Cities," New York, Natural Resources Defense Council, May 1996, pp. 13-32.

⁷ Sources of Cause of Death Statistics: Mothers Against Drunk Driving: <http://www.madd.org/home/> ; Center For Disease Control (CDC) October 14, 2004. Deaths Final Data: 2002, Table 11. Available at: http://www.cdc.gov/nchs/data/nvsr/nvsr53/nvsr53_05acc.pdf .

⁸ "Safety and Health Topics: Diesel Exhaust," US Occupational Safety and Health Administration: <http://www.osha.gov/SLTC/dieselexhaust/>.

⁹ "Environmental Justice: Fighting for Everyone's Right to Breathe Clean Air," American Lung Association of San Diego and Imperial Counties (2004).

¹⁰ "In the Spotlight: Environmental Justice," American Lung Association of California (May 2003).