



Diesel Pollution

When diesel engines burn fuel, they leave behind a dangerous stew of emissions. Because diesel vehicles and equipment often operate on the street level, this pollution is emitted exactly where people breathe.

How is diesel exhaust dangerous?

The exhaust from diesel vehicles and equipment contains more than 40 toxic air contaminants, carcinogens, ozone smog-forming compounds and fine particulate matter, often called “soot.” Soot pollution is especially dangerous, and diesel engines emit more than 75 percent of the fine particles from all vehicles.

Because of the particle’s small size (less than 1/30 the width of a single human hair), they evade the body’s natural defenses, such as coughing and sneezing, and penetrate deep into the lungs where they enter the bloodstream.

How does it affect our health?

In metropolitan Chicago, diesel soot pollution causes, on average, 482 deaths, 585 heart attacks, 845 cases of acute bronchitis and 17,847 asthma attacks every year. Exposure to diesel pollution is also known to increase the risk of lung cancer and stroke.

Solutions

- **Switch to cleaner fuels**, such as ultra-low sulfur diesel fuel (ULSD), which reduces soot pollution.
- **Retrofit vehicles and equipment** with pollution controls such as diesel particulate filters or diesel oxidation catalysts, which can reduce pollution by up to 90 percent.
- **Replace** old construction equipment with new lower-emission models.
- **Reduce engine idling.**

How you can help

Numerous local and state governments and public agencies are reducing diesel pollution by adopting “green construction requirements,” which require contractors working on public construction projects to use cleaner diesel fuel and/or pollution controls on their diesel vehicles and equipment. Sign on as an endorser of our Illinois Campaign to Clean Up Diesel Pollution or be an e-advocate.