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CONTACT:
Ashley Collins, RHAMC P: 312-628-0202, C: 773-329-0604
Emily Stuart, CA/Illinois P: 312-427-2114 ext. 207

Chicago Passes 3-Minute Engine Idling Limit to Curb Soot Pollution from Diesel Trucks and Buses

Group calls on city to further reduce diesel pollution by also passing green construction ordinance

CHICAGO—The Chicago City Council passed an ordinance today to update the city's air pollution code. Included in the ordinance is the city's first ever diesel engine idling limit aimed at reducing pollution from diesel trucks and buses. Operators who idle such engines longer than 3 minutes will face a \$250 fine. Chicago Police, city parking and traffic enforcement officials, and the Commissioner of the Environment have the authority to enforce this limit. Passage of the ordinance means Chicago now has the strongest engine idling prohibitions in the Midwest. New York City, Philadelphia, and Washington DC already have diesel engine idling limits of 3 minutes or less.

"The city of Chicago should be applauded for passing an idling limit," said Ashley Collins, environmental health associate for Respiratory Health Association of Metropolitan Chicago. "The black exhaust emitted from a diesel engine not only looks and smells toxic – it is. Diesel pollution is deadly and responsible for numerous health problems including lung cancer, asthma attacks, heart attacks, strokes and premature death."

According to the Clean Air Task Force, it is estimated that diesel particles alone cause 755 deaths, 1,021 heart attacks, 476 cases of chronic bronchitis and 17,017 asthma attacks each year in the Chicago metropolitan area. The Clean Air Task Force also ranks Chicago third in the national list of metropolitan areas with the gravest diesel impacts.

Because of the health threat posed by diesel exhaust, the Illinois Campaign to Clean Up Diesel Pollution called on the city to further curb diesel pollution by passing a green construction ordinance. Cook County passed a similar ordinance in May 2009, which requires contractors working on Cook County government projects to reduce soot levels by using clean fuels and exhaust filters on their diesel-powered vehicles and construction equipment. The campaign called on the city to adopt a similar ordinance.

"Construction equipment is a major source of diesel pollution," said Emily Stuart, an organizer for Citizen Action/Illinois. "And the good news: this problem is solvable. Commercially available devices called particulate filters can capture 90 percent or more of tailpipe soot, keeping it out of the air and out of people's lungs. It's time for the city to take the next step and protect families living in Chicago by passing a green construction ordinance."

For more information, visit www.lungchicago.org and www.citizenaction-il.org.

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Illinois Campaign to Clean Up Diesel Pollution is a coalition of more than 80 public health, environmental, labor and community organizations, led by Citizen Action/Illinois and Respiratory Health Association of Metropolitan Chicago, working to reduce diesel pollution in Illinois to protect public health and prevent global warming.

Idling and Green Construction Facts:

- Trucks consume an estimated one gallon of diesel fuel for each hour they idle, using as much as 2,000 gallons (per truck) of fuel every year.

--Source: US Department of Transportation--Federal Highway Administration.

<http://www.fhwa.dot.gov/environment/cmaqps/tseatach.htm>

- Nationwide, truck idling consumes almost 1 billion gallons of diesel fuel annually and emits an estimated 11 million tons of CO₂, 180,000 tons of NO_x, and 5,000 tons of PM.

--Source: US Department of Transportation--Federal Highway Administration.

<http://www.fhwa.dot.gov/environment/cmaqps/idlreduct/index.htm>

- 30% of land-based diesel particulate matter in Cook County comes from construction equipment.

--Source: US EPA National Emissions Inventory, 2005

- A bulldozer engine can emit as much particulate matter as more than 500 cars.

--Source: Clean Air Act Advisory Committee <http://www.epa.gov/diesel/documents/caaac-apr06.pdf>