

# DIESEL POLLUTION

## DIESEL POLLUTION MAKES US SICK

Diesel engines emit a mixture of particles, metals and gases including over 40 “hazardous air pollutants” as classified by the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) under the Clean Air Act. Diesel pollution can trigger asthma and cause lung cancer, stroke, and heart attack, contributing to 21,000 early deaths a year. Nationally, diesel exhaust poses a cancer risk that is 3 times greater than the combined risk of all air toxics assessed by EPA. Diesel exhaust is particularly dangerous because it is emitted at ground level — just where people breathe it in.<sup>1</sup>

*Clean Water Action is part of the Diesel Clean-Up Campaign, a nationwide collaboration of organizations committed to reducing diesel emissions 40 percent by the year 2012, 55 percent by 2015 and 70 percent by 2020. Achieving these goals will save tens of thousands of lives between now and 2030, improve health and well-being by reducing ailments such as heart and asthma attacks and help curb global warming. Diesel Clean-Up Campaign: [www.dieseldcleanup.org](http://www.dieseldcleanup.org)*



## DIESEL PUTS COMMUNITIES AT RISK

The diesel emissions from school buses, transit buses, construction and industrial equipment, trucks, locomotives, and marine vessels pose a serious public health threat. Because these kinds of sources are often concentrated in urban areas, people who live or work in cities face much greater risks from exposure. Diesel exhaust levels in urban areas cause a tripling of the cancer risk compared to suburban areas.

## DIESEL CONTRIBUTES TO CLIMATE CHANGE

Diesel also accounts for more than half of the United States’ “black carbon” emissions. Black carbon soot is approximately 2,000 times more potent as a global warming agent than an equal amount of carbon dioxide (CO<sub>2</sub>). The good news is that reducing black carbon is one of the few actions that will have immediate climate benefits, complementing long-term efforts to reduce CO<sub>2</sub> emissions.

## AFFORDABLE SOLUTIONS ARE AVAILABLE TODAY

Although there are clean diesel regulations for new engines to be 90% cleaner than their older counterparts, there are 11 million old, dirty diesels in the U.S. that may be in use for decades to come. However, retrofits available today can reduce diesel particulate matter and black carbon emissions by at least 90%. Studies indicate that for every dollar spent on reducing particulate matter pollution from diesel engines, \$12 would be avoided in monetized health damages. Additionally, a 2008 report estimates that \$1 billion investment in clean diesel technology can create 19,000 new jobs.<sup>2</sup>

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## GOVERNMENT AT ALL LEVELS CAN CONTRIBUTE TO SOLUTIONS

Clean Water Action works with communities nationwide on solutions, including:

### *Federal*

- The federal Diesel Emissions Reduction Act (DERA) funds retrofits of existing heavy-duty diesel vehicles and engines. Congress has not appropriated enough money to meet this program's needs. Clean Water Action supports full funding of this effective and efficient program that brings immediate public health benefits and global warming pollution reductions.
- Congress should require and pay for the use of clean diesel equipment on federally funded transportation projects.

### *State*

Clean Water Action is working in multiple states to win policies that will clean up diesel pollution. See the Rhode Island case study box below.

### *Local*

Local government can be a leader in cleaning up diesel pollution, while creating jobs and providing immediate health benefits to residents. The New Jersey Environmental Federation's Kids Clean Air Zones project promotes diesel emissions reduction resolutions in towns and encourages schools and parents to sign a Diesel No Idling Pledge.

### **CASE STUDY: Cleaning Up Diesel Pollution in Rhode Island**

- Rhode Island has the 8th highest child asthma rate with 1 in 10 children affected.
- Rhode Island ranks in the worst 10% of all states for health problems caused by diesel pollution.
- Each year, diesel pollution in RI is responsible for 51 premature deaths, 80 heart attacks and 900 asthma attacks in addition to cancer, stroke and respiratory and cardiovascular disease.
- Preventable emergency room visits and other health care costs attributed to diesel-induced illnesses cost Rhode Island over \$300 million each year.

### **Clean Water Action Campaign Successes in Rhode Island are a Model for Other States**

- **2006: Idling is against the law:** No diesel vehicle may idle longer than 5 minutes anywhere in the state (emergency vehicles are exempt).
- **2007: Diesel Emissions Reduction Act:** By 2010 all state school buses will be equipped with advanced pollution controls.
- **Rhode Island Public Transit Authority (RIPTA):** The state's public transit operators voluntarily retrofit 50% of the bus fleet with diesel particulate filters.
- **Cities Take Action:** In 2008 Providence, Pawtucket, Newport and Warwick passed local ordinances seeking greater enforcement of the state's Anti-Idle law and calling on the state to regulate diesel emissions even further. In 2009 and 2010 Providence and Cranston passed clean construction ordinances to clean up city-owned and contracted vehicles used on large construction projects. In 2009 Providence received a half a million dollar federal grant to transform the city's diesel fleet to reduce pollution by up to 90%.
- **2010: RI passed the Clean Construction Law,** requiring diesel vehicles contracted by the state to be equipped with pollution control devices, adhere to the state anti-idling law and be fueled with cleaner burning ultra-low sulfur diesel fuel (ULSD).



*ON THE SAME SIDE OF THE TABLE: Former Warwick Mayor Joseph Walsh, lobbyist for the construction trades industry, and Nicole Poepping from Clean Water Action testify before the House Finance Committee in favor of RI's Clean Construction Law.*

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<sup>1</sup> <http://www.epa.gov/diesel/>

<sup>2</sup> KeyBridge Research (2008)

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