

## Establishing a Ban on Diesel Fuel: Harmful to Public Health

**PROPOSAL:** *Implement a ban on the manufacture, sale and distribution of diesel fuel in California*

### **THE PROBLEM**

Diesel exhaust from burning diesel fuel is a major source of air pollution, greenhouse gases, black carbon, and diesel particulate matter. All of these are bad, but worst of all are the health impacts from diesel exhaust, and more specifically, a component of the exhaust known as diesel particulate matter (DPM) which is a major health hazard. It is estimated that about 70% of total known cancer risk related to air toxics in California is attributable to diesel particulate matter.

Diesel exhaust is a complex mixture of gases and fine particles emitted by diesel-fueled internal combustion engines. It includes over 40 substances listed as hazardous air pollutants by the United States Environmental Protection Agency (U.S. EPA) and California Air Resources Board (CARB). At least fifteen of these substances are listed by the International Agency for Research on Cancer (IARC) as carcinogenic to humans, or as a probable or possible human carcinogen including arsenic, benzene, dioxins, formaldehyde, inorganic lead, and mercury compounds.

People are exposed to diesel particulate matter (DPM) from breathing air containing diesel exhaust. DPM size range is of 10 microns or less, allowing it to be inhaled and deposited in the lungs. The highest level of exposure is experienced by people living near ports, rail yards and freeways where diesel fuel is used to operate vehicles and machinery. People living and working in cities and industrial areas and near heavy trucks or train traffic are most likely to encounter DPM, and 30-55% of daily DPM exposure happens during the time spent in motor vehicles while driving among diesel truck traffic.

According to OSHA, "short term exposure to high concentrations of diesel exhaust and DPM can cause headache, dizziness, and irritation of the eye, nose and throat severe enough to distract or disable...workers. Prolonged exposure can increase the risk of cardiovascular, cardiopulmonary and respiratory disease and lung cancer."

DPM has a significant impact on the ability to breathe and can lead to the development of asthma in children, as well as COPD and pulmonary fibrosis in adults. If exposed to DPM and air pollution at a young age, the lungs of children don't grow as fast as they should which can result in underdevelopment and cause trouble breathing up until adulthood.

### **THE SOLUTION**

Based on its harmful health impacts, BREATHE LA is proposing that there be a ban on the manufacture, sale and distribution of diesel fuel for use in motor vehicles by the year 2023, and for use in diesel generators and other non-vehicular equipment by 2025.



**We must ban diesel now! Waiting just means Southern Californians will continue to get sick.**

## **WHY THE BAN OF DIESEL FUEL MATTERS?**

Since 1990 the California Office of Environmental Health Hazard Assessment identified Diesel Engine Exhaust as a carcinogen. In 2012, the International Agency for Cancer Research classified diesel exhaust (including DPM) as a known human carcinogen. The California Air Resources Board identified cancer and non-cancer health effects attributable to diesel DPM such as lung cancer, cardiopulmonary death, decreased lung function, hospitalizations due to cardiovascular and respiratory emergencies, asthma flare ups and exacerbations for those chronic obstructive pulmonary disease (COPD).

It has been decades since we have known of the negative health impacts from diesel engine exhaust. Clean technology in our transportation fleets has reduced some of the emissions, but the effects from DPM and air pollution are still being experienced heavily by disadvantaged communities.

## **WHAT THE BILL DOES**

The bill would enact a ban, as of July 1, 2023, on the manufacture, sale and distribution of diesel fuel for use in on-road motor vehicles (i.e. cars, trucks, buses, vans, motorhomes and motorcycles) or off-road motor vehicles (i.e. golf carts, construction equipment, forklifts, marine vehicles, aerial lifts, aircraft tugs, snowblowers, lawn mowers, etc.). As of July 1, 2025, there would be a ban on all other uses of diesel fuel, including for diesel-powered generators.

## **WHY IS BREATHE LA PROPOSING LEGISLATION TO BAN DIESEL FUEL?**

The Air Resources Board has estimated that newly adopted diesel exhaust control measures will reduce population exposure to diesel exhaust pollution. ARB has estimated that there will only be a 50% reduction in diesel emissions, meaning that Californians who live near ports, rail yards, freeways, and major transportation corridors with a lot of truck traffic, as well as those living and working in cities and industrial areas and those in disadvantaged communities will still be exposed to a known carcinogen and health hazard. Banning the manufacture and sale of diesel fuel targets diesel emissions completely, resulting in significant reductions in chronic lung disease and lung cancer, priorities for BREATHE LA. Enacting a ban legislatively eliminates a serious health hazard that may take decades to eliminate if we wait for state regulators. We must ban diesel now! Waiting just means Southern Californians will continue to get sick as diesel-fueled trucks, trains, ships and planes spew out diesel exhaust and send DPM into the air where it can be inhaled.

## **ABOUT BREATHE LA**

Breathe California of Los Angeles County (BREATHE LA) is a nonprofit organization dedicated to clean-air and lung health through research, education, advocacy and technology. BREATHE LA is dedicated to promoting solutions to improve air quality and reduce chronic lung diseases by partnering with community organizations, advocating for public policy changes, sponsoring lung health research, and educating the public.

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