

# Portland Neighbors Addressing Diesel Pollution

We all love “green” Portland and those amazing glimpses of Mt. Hood on clear days. Perhaps, however, we should avoid taking deep breaths while enjoying the view. Portland ranks in the worst 1% of counties for airborne diesel particulates and the worst city in America for respiratory distress from air pollution, according to the most recent Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) national assessment.

Diesel exhaust is 100 times more toxic than gasoline engine exhaust according to a 2008 study in *Journal of the American Board of Family Medicine*. Diesel exhaust is 80%-95% ultra-fine particles of carbon “soot” with cancer-causing chemical riders that evade our natural defenses, reach the lungs, pass into the bloodstream, and circulate to our vital organs including the heart and brain.

The World Health Organization warns that diesel particulates cause lung and bladder cancer. The CA Air Resources Board warns of links to heart attacks, cardiovascular disease, respiratory problems, and other health issues. The risks for children, the elderly, and those with asthma or weak immune systems are especially high. Many of the toxins in diesel have no safe level of exposure.

Diesel exhaust affects all of us, but impacts those in our communities with

lower incomes more heavily. That is due to residential locations near emission sites and corridors, such as truck routes; and because those with lower incomes are less able to relocate.

## What Must Be Done?

### Oregon must

- ◆ Update the weak Oregon health benchmark for diesel particulates to match California’s standard (0.0033 micrograms per cubic meter of air).
- ◆ Inspect older, unfiltered, heavy-duty diesel trucks and buses and require filtration or replacement.
- ◆ Renew and expand programs to help independent truck owners comply with a safe Oregon standard.

### Portland and Multnomah County must

- ◆ Apply legal, fiscal, and regulatory powers to reduce emission concentrations to safe levels.
- ◆ Begin continual neighborhood monitoring of diesel exhaust so diesel pollution can be tracked and reported on a regular basis.
- ◆ Demand state action to require diesel filters for trucks operating near residential areas, and to limit idling.

### As a concerned neighbor, please

- ◆ Become informed and share this brochure with family and neighbors.
- ◆ Join our letter-writing and phone-calling campaigns as announced.

Urge your neighborhood association to endorse this effort.

- ◆ Participate in, and contribute to, organizations that actively support this campaign; for example, Portland Clean Air (<http://portlandcleanair.org>) which has stepped up to help neighborhood groups.

### **Please Help Us Stop this Threat**

Requiring filters now will cost less than the hospital bills and lost work caused by exposure to diesel emissions by those who live, work, and go to school in greater Portland.

#### **Concerns, Questions, Want to help?**

Email us at

[cleandiesel@brooklyn.neighborhood.org](mailto:cleandiesel@brooklyn.neighborhood.org)

### **Who are we?**

We are a coalition of neighborhood associations and civic groups across Portland. We have focused initially on the Brooklyn Rail Yard and surrounding neighborhoods directly impacted by this intensifying concentration of diesel activity. We believe that reducing diesel emissions at the Rail Yard is the key to safer air for millions of people in Portland and in Oregon's cities and transportation corridors. We invite your neighborhood association or civic group to join us.

### **Brooklyn Rail Yard and its Impacts**

This rail/truck depot is a large industrial facility surrounded by six residential neighborhoods. Its truck entrance is on SE Holgate near 18th and its exit on SE McLoughlin at Harold.

Diesel emissions from this site have increased since Union Pacific's continuing consolidation of its rail/truck container operations. The resulting truck traffic to and from the Rail Yard is nearly 1,000 trucks per day. That number is likely to increase with Union Pacific's on-going plan to triple the Yard's capacity over the next few years.

Nitrogen dioxide (NO<sub>2</sub>) is a good indicator of diesel particulate emissions. A 2008 study by Portland State University, using NO<sub>2</sub> sensors has identified the Rail Yard as having the highest concentration of NO<sub>2</sub> in Portland.

Reducing diesel emissions from this site will require replacing older trucks or retrofitting with filters. That will also improve air quality in neighborhoods along several truck routes to/from the Rail Yard and, with your help, launch a broader and long-overdue reform.

#### **For more information, citations, and references, go to:**

<http://brooklyn-neighborhood.org/stopping-diesel-pollution/>

This address leads to several sources, including: "Brooklyn Railyard Report" (2017) by Creston-Kenilworth Neighborhood Assn.; "Commercial Diesel Trucks" and "Diesel Truck Mitigation" (2018) by Portland Clean Air; and "Airborne Particulate Matter and Public Health" (2015) by Oregon Physicians for Social Responsibility.