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U.S. is world leader in black carbon emissions; harms public health and environment

57% of black carbon emissions come from on- and off-road diesel engines

Columbus, OH – World leaders are gathered in Copenhagen, Denmark, to develop a plan to combat global climate change. Carbon dioxide (CO₂) and other greenhouse gases will be addressed, but will black carbon?

Black carbon comes from diesel engines and other sources and, as a warming agent, is about 2,000 times more potent than the equivalent amount of CO₂ over a 20-year period. According to David R. Celebrezze, Director of Air & Water Special Projects for the Ohio Environmental Council, “we can’t ignore the dangers of black carbon by focusing only on CO₂.”

The United State has the highest per-capita emissions of black carbon in the world according to the Clean Air Task Force. 41% of U.S. black carbon emissions come from on-road diesel engines and 16% from off-road diesel engines. This particulate matter is about 1/30th the size of a human hair. When inhaled it can bypass the body’s natural defenses and cause illness.

“The solution to black carbon emissions is simple: emission control devices,” states Celebrezze. “Policies, like including wording in construction contracts that promotes diesel particulate filters, will help sensitive populations -- such as children and those with asthma - breathe easier. It is a win-win.”

Diesel particulate filters can eliminate up to 90% of black carbon emissions. This filter can be installed on electronically controlled heavy-duty diesel engines model years 1995 to 2006. More than 250 filters have been (or are being) installed on fleets in central Ohio. However, requiring emission limits on construction projects can ensure deep reductions in black carbon emissions. Such reductions will also help Ohio meet federal air quality standards.

“Green” construction contract language requires public works projects \$2 million and above to use emission control technologies that reduce pollution by 85%.

“Congress and the Obama Administration need to connect the dots and pass green construction contract language legislation to ensure that taxpayers are not paying for policies that harm their own health,” states Celebrezze.

Senator George Voinovich championed the 2005 Diesel Emission Reduction Act (DERA) grant program. This program has helped Ohio cities, schools, and private fleets install pollution control devices. However, the last round of funds awarded totaled only \$300 million, despite grant applicants seeking a total of \$2 billion. According to the U.S. EPA, for every dollar spent in the DERA program, more than \$13 of economic and health benefits are generated. Additionally, according to the Department of Labor Quarterly Census of Employment, Ohio is a leader in retrofit technology, ranking third in the nation for employing industries related to diesel retrofits.

According to the U.S. E.P.A., diesel exhaust contains more than 40 toxins, including known and probable carcinogens such as benzene and formaldehyde. It also contains particulate matter, particles that are only 1/30th the width of a human hair. Particle pollution is so small that, according to medical scientists, it can be inhaled deeply into a person's lungs and can penetrate the bloodstream.

According to the U.S. E.P.A., diesel exhaust can:

- Trigger asthma attacks and cause lung damage, heart disease, cancer, and early death.
- Cause acid rain, ozone smog, haze, and global climate change.
- Drive up costs for business from lost work days caused by air pollution-related illness and by forcing counties in non-attainment areas to offset increases in emissions.

According to the Clean Air Task Force, health impacts from diesel soot total \$5.1 billion in Ohio.

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The mission of the Ohio Environmental Council (OEC) is to secure healthy air, land, and water for all who call Ohio home. The OEC is Ohio's leading advocate for fresh air, clean water, and sustainable land use. The OEC has a 40-year history of innovation, pragmatism, and success. Using legislative initiatives, legal action, scientific principles, and statewide partnerships, the OEC secures a healthier environment for Ohio's families and communities. For more information, visit www.theOEC.org.