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PA Environmental Quality Board
Public Hearing Re: PA Clean Vehicle Program
Statement of Rachel Martin
March 14, 2006

Hello. My name is Rachel Martin. I live at 311 Pitt St. in Wilkinsburg, PA 15221. I am here today to state my support for the Department of Environmental Protection's proposed changes to the Pennsylvania Clean Vehicle Program.

When I moved to Pittsburgh just a couple years ago from Clarion County, I was struck by the visible smog I could see on hot summer days, obscuring the famous Pittsburgh skyline. My husband and I had some concerns about moving to the area, as he has asthma, and we were concerned that the poor local air quality would make it worse. But, we moved here anyway, and his asthma has indeed gotten worse.

I've talked to a lot of older folks in this area, and they remark on how much cleaner the air is than it was in the past – they tell stories of days when you couldn't see the sun for the smoke and soot. Clearly, the region's air quality has improved from 50 years ago, but we still have a long way to go. The emissions reductions that would result from implementation of the PA Clean Vehicles Program are an important step in making our air cleaner and healthier. A recent study sponsored by the EPA and the CDC found that any reduction in smog-forming ozone would benefit public health by decreasing premature deaths. The difference in emissions reductions between the PA Clean Vehicle Program and the federal standards is not trivial – it can be measured in lives saved.

We know we need to clean up our air. We know we need to find ways to reduce oil consumption. The Pennsylvania Clean Vehicle Program does both of these, while saving consumers money at the pump and providing more fuel-efficient vehicle choices. This is a "no-brainer." Again, please support the DEP's proposed changes to the Pennsylvania Clean Vehicle Program. Thank you.

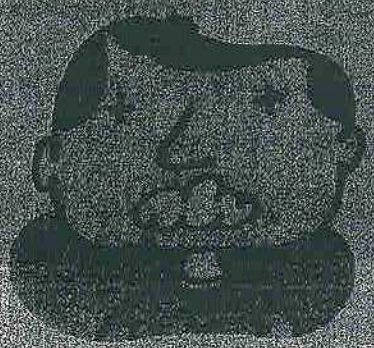
STANDARDS

NY Times

Even Approved Amount of Ozone Is Found Harmful

A study sponsored by the Environmental Protection Agency and the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention has found that air even at the E.P.A.'s current acceptable level of ozone — 80 parts per billion — can bring on a significantly increased risk of premature death.

Ozone, the major component of smog, is a molecule consisting of three oxygen atoms bound together. It can cause lung damage when inhaled. By applying statistical models to air pollution, weather and mortality for 95 American cities over a 14-year period, the researchers determined that an increase of 10 parts per billion in ozone concentrations measured day to day causes a 0.3 percent increase in early mortality.



The study will be published in April in the print edition of Environmental Health Perspectives and is now online at the journal's Web site.

Michelle L. Bell, the lead author on the study, said that in a city the size of New York, a 0.3 percent increase in mortality was equivalent to an additional 2,000 deaths a year.

"Even very low levels of ozone concentration are dangerous," said Dr. Bell, an assistant professor in the School of Forestry and Environmental Studies at Yale.

"We found strong evidence that if there is any safe level for ozone's impact on mortality, it is at very low concentrations, nearing natural background levels," she said. "This means that any reduction in ozone would benefit public health, even in areas that currently meet regulatory standards."

The E.P.A. is reviewing the scientific information on ozone to decide whether to revise the standards set in 1997, Dr. Bell added. "One hundred million people live in areas that exceed the current E.P.A. acceptable level," she said.