



T H E P O I S O N C O N T R O L C E N T E R

February 21, 2008

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Environmental Quality Board  
P.O. Box 8477  
Harrisburg, PA 17105

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Dear Board,

The Poison Control Center strives to protect citizens of Eastern Pennsylvania from injury due to poisoning. To this end, The Poison Control Center supports, in concept, proposed regulations by the Environmental Quality Board to limit diesel vehicle idling to no more than 5 minutes in a 60 minute period. The proposed regulations are available at <http://www.pabulletin.com/secure/data/vol38/38-2/45.html>.

Diesel engines are one of the Commonwealth's largest primary sources of fine particulate matter pollution and nitrogen oxide pollution. These pollutants are defined by the United States Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) as "criteria pollutants" considered harmful to public health and the environment. In 2004, nineteen counties in Pennsylvania did not meet the EPA's National Ambient Air Quality Standards with regard to fine particulate matter or oxides of nitrogen. Pennsylvania citizens may be at particular risk of diesel exhaust pollution due to its network of heavily traveled interstate highways, and due to legislation in neighboring states that promotes engine idling within our Commonwealth.

Diesel exhaust is a heterogenous mixture of carbonaceous particles with various hydrocarbon molecules adsorbed to their surfaces. The very small size of these particles allows them to be inhaled deep into the lungs. Animal and human research demonstrates that diesel exhaust contributes to cancer risk, causes airway inflammation, exacerbates asthma, and has many other acute and chronic health consequences.

There can be nothing so sacrosanct as our societal responsibility to protect the air we breathe, the water we drink, and the soil upon which we live. Reducing diesel engine idling will clearly result in a decrease in air pollution. With the availability of satisfactory alternatives which are not cost-prohibitive, such reduction is just plain sensible. The Environmental Quality Board's proposed limits to diesel vehicle idling will benefit the health of the citizens of the Commonwealth.

Sincerely,

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Medical Director

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Senior Toxicologist and Assistant Medical Director

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