

# Allegheny County

## *Partnership to Reduce Diesel Pollution*

*A project led by Group Against Smog and Pollution and Clean Water Action*

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### **Environmental Groups Praise PNC for Reducing Diesel Emissions; Urge Other Institutions to Do the Same**

The Allegheny County Partnership to Reduce Diesel Pollution, led by Group Against Smog and Pollution and Clean Water Action, applauded PNC's recent announcement that building contractors of [The Tower at PNC Plaza](#) will be required to minimize diesel emissions during construction activity.

The Tower at PNC Plaza, expected to be complete in 2015, is already being touted as the greenest skyscraper in the world. The Tower's design currently calls for a double glass facade with operable windows to enhance energy efficiency and allow natural air flow into the building; a vegetated rooftop and greywater retention system; and geothermal-linked heating system.

"PNC's most environmentally-friendly skyscraper in the world just got even greener by requiring contractors to use cleaner construction equipment," said Rachel Filippini, Executive Director of Group Against Smog and Pollution. "Cleaning up construction sites not only benefits the construction workers operating the equipment, but also the many people who live and work in downtown Pittsburgh."

"Leveraging more than ten years of green building experience, PNC continues to look for innovative ways to improve its building practices," said Gary Jay Saulson, PNC's director of corporate real estate. "Adopting diesel emission standards for the construction of The Tower at PNC Plaza is a natural extension of our commitment to the environment and local community."

"The Diesel Partnership is working with many local institutions, including several universities, to institute similar diesel emission reduction policies. And we are so pleased that PNC is leading the way by improving air quality in the region" said Kathy Lawson, Policy Associate at Clean Water Action.

PNC's announcement to require EPA Tier 4 emission requirements follows in the footsteps of [UPMC](#), which announced a similar policy last summer. It also follows in Pittsburgh's Clean Air Act of 2010, which requires contractors working on publicly subsidized projects to use some percentage of cleaner equipment on the work site.

Diesel pollution creates serious public health hazards. Diesel exhaust contains many toxic air pollutants, carcinogens, ozone-forming elements, and fine particulate matter. Exposure to fine

particles causes asthma attacks, heart attacks, lung cancer, strokes, and premature deaths. In Pittsburgh alone, it is estimated diesel fine particles cause 84 premature deaths and 89 non-fatal heart attacks in adults, and 1,684 incidences of asthma exacerbation in children annually.<sup>1</sup> A recent Carnegie Mellon University study of air toxics concluded that diesel particulate matter is the dominant cancer risk among air pollutants in downtown Pittsburgh.<sup>2</sup> According to Children's Hospital, while the Pittsburgh region has the same rate of asthma as the nation, use of emergency services by local children with asthma is 300 percent to 400 percent above the national average, with local children being hospitalized two to three times the rate recommended by recent studies.<sup>3</sup>

Why focus on reducing emissions from construction equipment? The construction industry uses more diesel engines than any other sector, and according to EPA, it generates roughly 32% of all land-based non-road oxides of nitrogen (NOx) emissions and more than 37% of land-based particulate matter 10 micrometers or less in size (PM10).

Poor air quality created by diesel emissions has an adverse affect on our community's health, especially our children and the elderly, who are more vulnerable to air pollution. They also have a negative impact on construction workers who are receiving the most potent, toxic dose of diesel emissions as they work around that equipment each day.

Two major [studies](#) of health risks from diesel pollution from the National Cancer Institute (NCI) and the National Institute for Occupational Safety and Health (NIOSH) underscore the need to reduce diesel emissions. These studies examined the public health risks of diesel pollution by looking at a group of 12,000 mining industry workers exposed to diesel carbon particles, and found an astonishing three-fold increased risk of both lung cancer and premature mortality among this study sample. Furthermore, the researchers found that lifetime exposure to diesel exhaust in some U.S. urban areas with high levels of diesel carbon pollution could carry similar risks. According to the study, particularly at risk are other workers besides miners who are continuously exposed to diesel exhaust, such as the 1.8 million heavy truck drivers and 460,000 heavy construction equipment operators in this country as estimated by the Bureau of Labor Statistics in 2008.

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*The Group Against Smog and Pollution, Inc. (GASP) is a Pittsburgh-based nonprofit citizens group working for a healthy, sustainable environment. Founded in 1969, GASP serves as a watchdog, educator, litigator, and policy-maker on many environmental issues with a focus on air quality in southwestern Pennsylvania.*

*Clean Water Action is a national organization dedicated to fighting for clean air and water. In Pittsburgh, Clean Water Action has been on the forefront of reducing toxic emissions in our air, promoting policies that will bring our area into compliance with the Clean Air Act, and searching for solutions to our city's stormwater runoff problems.*

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<sup>1</sup> Clean Air Task Force report, "Diesel and Health in American: The Lingering Threat," February 2005. <http://www.catf.us/diesel/dieselhealth/msa.php?site=0&m=38300>

<sup>2</sup> Pittsburgh Post Gazette, *Diesel exhaust at risky levels Downtown, study finds*, November 6, 2008. <http://www.post-gazette.com/pg/08311/925796-113.stm>

<sup>3</sup> Pittsburgh Post Gazette, *Renowned researcher to study children's asthma here*, January 2, 2009. <http://www.post-gazette.com/pg/09002/939107-114.stm>