

# Reducing Diesel Particle Pollution



## A Message from the Spokane Regional Clean Air Agency

**Background** — According to the Washington State Department of Ecology, diesel exhaust harms health more than any other pollutant in Washington state. More than 4 million people in Washington live or work close to busy roads where diesel exhaust is at its highest. People with health conditions, such as asthma, heart disease and lung disease have more health problems when exposed to diesel exhaust. Exposure to diesel exhaust puts even healthy people at an increased risk for respiratory disease and cancer.



*Breathing diesel particle pollution is linked to immediate and long term health effects.*

### What is diesel exhaust and why be concerned?

Diesel exhaust is made up on tiny, highly toxic particles that penetrate our lungs and remain there indefinitely to create and/or worsen both heart and lung conditions. Exposure to diesel particles is linked to immediate and long-term health effects, including:

- irritating eyes, nose and throat
- causing coughing, labored breathing, chest tightness and wheezing
- making healthy children and adults more susceptible to developing respiratory conditions
- increasing the risk of heart attack or stroke for those with pre-existing heart disease or circulatory problems
- causing lung cancer

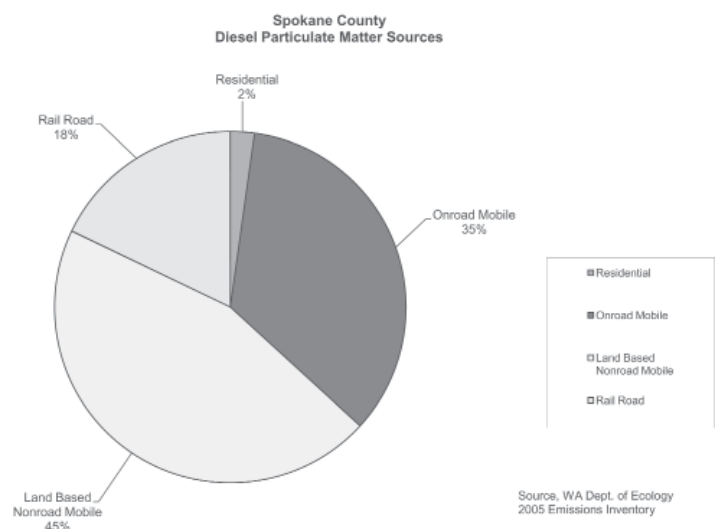
### Where does diesel exhaust come from?

Diesel exhaust comes from diesel engines, such as farm and construction equipment, and vehicles—including cars, trucks and buses and trains. Fine particles also come from sources other than diesel, such as smoke from wood heating, outdoor burning and wildfires, but they are not as toxic as the particles from diesel.

### Who should be concerned about diesel exhaust?

We should all be concerned. People come into contact with harmful levels of diesel exhaust in both urban and rural areas, such as near a rail yard, a busy truck stop, or any place near a major road. More than four million in Washington live and work near busy roads where diesel exhaust is most common. These people are potentially being exposed to harmful levels of diesel exhaust on a regular basis.

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### **What has been done to reduce diesel exhaust?**

Under state funding, many public fleets—including school buses, garbage trucks, transit buses, etc.—throughout Spokane County have been retrofitted with equipment to reduce emissions. These retrofits have been done mainly on pre-2007 diesel engines. Older, more polluting engines have a long life span and could continue running for many years before being replaced by new, cleaner engines. New engines (2007 and newer) are much cleaner and are not a priority for funding.

### **What else needs to be done?**

The relatively easy and cost-effective retrofits have been done in our area. What's left to tackle are all the private heavy and light duty vehicles, construction and farm equipment, and locomotives.

### **Is reducing diesel exhaust worth the cost?**

The benefits outweigh the costs of reducing diesel exhaust. For every dollar spent to reduce diesel emissions, we save \$3 - \$8 in health care costs and diesel fleet operating and maintenance costs, according to the California Air Resources Board. For every dollar spent on diesel retrofits, society gets back \$9 - \$16 dollars, according to the Union of Concerned Scientists.



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