



# Media Release

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## **West Oakland Residents Choking on Toxic Diesel Exhaust Indoor Air in Some Homes 5x More Toxic Than Other Parts of Oakland**

WEST OAKLAND, CALIF – Residents of West Oakland are exposed to far more than their fair share of toxic diesel pollution, but solutions to reduce diesel pollution abound. That's the central message of a new report released today by the Pacific Institute of Oakland, California, the West Oakland Environmental Indicators Project (WOEIP), and the Coalition for West Oakland Revitalization (CWOR). "Clearing the Air: Reducing Diesel Pollution in West Oakland," which builds on community ideas and employed residents to conduct on-the-ground research, also looks at innovative ways to reduce truck traffic and pollution in residential areas, and improve community health.

"Diesel pollution is the most toxic air pollutant in California. Over a lifetime, West Oakland residents may be exposed to hundreds of times the cancer risk considered significant under federal law just from breathing this polluted air. With truck trips through West Oakland set to double as the Port of Oakland expands over the coming years, we've got to get serious about reducing diesel pollution," said Meena Palaniappan, a Senior Research Associate with the Pacific Institute.

According to a truck count carried out by local residents under the direction of the Pacific Institute, 18-wheel semi-trucks carrying goods to and from the Port of Oakland make thousands of trips per day through West Oakland. By 2010, this number is expected to reach 22,000 truck trips per day – double current traffic. These trucks spew an estimated 90 tons of diesel pollution per year – over twice the amount of toxic diesel pollution per person than in Alameda County.

"Those of us who live here have always known that diesel pollution is a major threat," said Margaret Gordon a long-time resident of West Oakland and member of the WOEIP committee, whose house was selected as one of the two indoor monitoring sites. "Every day we do a dance to keep soot from diesel exhaust and other pollution off of our blinds and window sills. My son, my four grand-children, and I also suffer from asthma. Although it's impossible to know the cause, with research showing that diesel exhaust may cause or worsen asthma, we are worried to say the least."

Using an aethalometer – a device that measures the amount of black carbon in the air – researchers estimated the level of diesel pollution in Ms. Gordon's home and another home, both located near busy West Oakland intersections. Average pollution levels in the two homes were five times greater than the control site.

"Diesel exhaust causes cancer, worsens asthma, and may lead to premature death," explained Mary Lake, a nurse, West Oakland resident, and co-chair of the WOEIP committee. "The good news is, with the help of the community we are developing practical, workable solutions that can bring relief to people in West Oakland while reducing air pollution throughout the Bay Area and far beyond."

The report, guided by the community-run WOEIP committee and employing local residents to count trucks, recommends a host of solutions to the problems of diesel pollution and truck traffic. These include stepped up enforcement of illegal truck traffic, moving truck-related businesses away from residential areas and out onto land owned by the Port and Army Base, the installation of electrical hook-ups so trucks waiting to enter the Port don't have to idle, financial incentives to get the dirtiest trucks off the road, and the creation of new truck routes with signs and other outreach to ensure that drivers know the right route.

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The report and other media materials are available online at: <http://www.pacinst.org/diesel>