

# Allegheny County

## *Partnership to Reduce Diesel Pollution*

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

---

November 23, 2010

Immediate Release

Contact:

Rachel Filippini  
Group Against Smog & Pollution  
(412) 325-7382

Tom Hoffman  
Clean Water Action  
(412) 765-3053 x 202

Bret H. Goodpaster, Ph.D.  
Division of Endocrinology  
and Metabolism  
University of Pittsburgh  
Department of Medicine  
(412) 692-2848

### **National Harvard University Study Links Diabetes Epidemic to Airborne Soot Emphasizes Need for Continued Reductions of Diesel Emissions in Pittsburgh Area**

Over the past 15 years diabetes prevalence has more than doubled in the U.S. A major new study conducted by Harvard University researchers has established for the first time that particulate matter (PM2.5) in the air, a major component of diesel emissions, is linked to diabetes. Hundreds of medical studies have linked exposure to particulate matter to lung and heart disease and premature death, but this is the first nationwide study to quantitatively link diabetes to particulate matter exposure in U.S. cities.

During November, which is National Diabetes Awareness Month, Group Against Smog and Pollution (GASP) and Clean Water Action are calling for continued efforts to reduce diesel pollution in the Pittsburgh metropolitan area, primarily through passage of the pending legislation in City Council that would require construction vehicles on large publicly funded development projects to drastically reduce their diesel emissions. Both organizations are also urging Congress to re-authorize the Diesel Emission Reduction Act, currently pending in Congress.

“This new study provides compelling evidence linking higher diabetes prevalence with higher levels of particulate matter. We have known for quite a while now that chronic inflammation is strongly linked with obesity and diabetes, and that exposure to particulate matter can cause inflammatory responses, but this is the first study in humans to connect those dots,” said Bret H. Goodpaster, Ph.D., an Associate Professor in the Division of Endocrinology and Metabolism at the University of Pittsburgh School of Medicine.

The study found that counties with higher levels of particulate matter had an increased prevalence of diabetes *even in counties that met the guidelines of the Clean Air Act*. These results persisted even after they were adjusted for ethnicity, obesity, health insurance, and education.

“The results of this new study underscore the importance of reducing diesel emissions in our region. While we have made some progress, further reductions are necessary, especially in the construction and marine sectors, which make up a large proportion of our diesel emissions locally,” said Rachel Filippini, executive director of Group Against Smog and Pollution. “Proven technology exists to clean up diesel vehicles and is just begging to be used.”

Because diesel emissions are a major source of particulate matter, results of the study suggest that people living around and working near diesels may be at a higher risk for diabetes. Commuters, people living in urban neighborhoods along truck or bus routes, and people that work with diesel construction equipment or in rail, bus, or trucking centers are among the most exposed to diesel particulate matter. Pittsburgh's air is high in particulates and frequently is near the top in ratings of cities with a significant PM2.5 problem.

“The more we study pollution from diesel, the more we find that it is extremely hazardous to people's health. This study is just another in a long line of studies that show how dangerous diesel pollution is,” said Tom Hoffman, Western Pennsylvania Director for Clean Water Action. “Passage of the City Council legislation to drastically reduce diesel emissions on publicly funded development projects would go a long way in reducing Pittsburgher's exposure to these fumes.”

More information:

Diabetes Care, October 2010; *Association Between fine Particulate Matter and Diabetes Prevalence in the U.S.* -- <http://care.diabetesjournals.org/content/33/10/2196>

Proposed City of Pittsburgh Clean Air Act --

<http://pittsburgh.legistar.com/LegislationDetail.aspx?ID=665363&GUID=61CB7424-FE95-4A21-8368-F53F9EE4BC1B&Options=&Search=>

###

*Bret H. Goodpaster is an Associate Professor in the Division of Endocrinology and Metabolism at the University of Pittsburgh School of Medicine. He is a nationally and internationally-recognized expert in the study of obesity and diabetes.*

*The Group Against Smog and Pollution, Inc. (GASP) is Pittsburgh-based non-profit 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.*