

**Testimony to the Multnomah County Board of Commissioners
on Clean Diesel Procurement Policy (Sept. 20, 2018 Agenda Item R.5)**

**Chris Hagerbaumer, Deputy Director
Oregon Environmental Council**

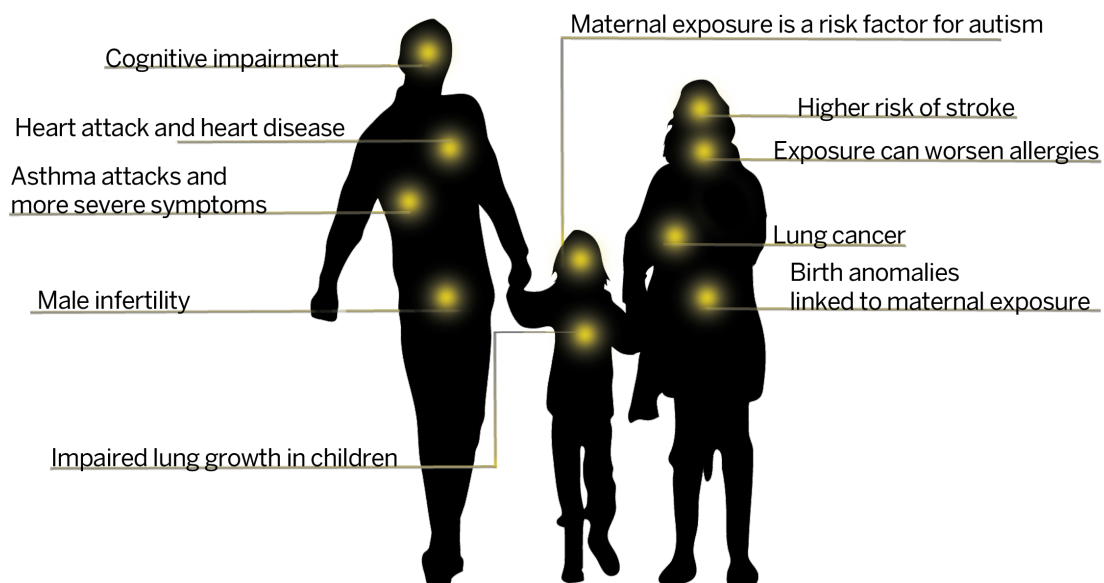
Founded in 1968, the Oregon Environmental Council (OEC) is a nonprofit, nonpartisan, membership-based organization. We advance innovative, collaborative and equitable solutions to Oregon's environmental challenges for today and future generations.

Oregon Environmental Council supports the Clean Diesel Procurement Policy that will require contractors working on county construction projects to use equipment that reduces air pollution.

Diesel engines have superior longevity and durability, but unfortunately, older diesel engines emit toxic exhaust that compromises human health (as detailed in the graphic below). In Multnomah County, most residents are exposed to diesel pollution at levels higher than the state's health benchmark, in some areas many times higher. And diesel pollution is an environmental justice issue: census tracts with higher than average Black/African American, Asian/Pacific Islander and/or Latino residents have two to three times more exposure to diesel particulate matter than census tracts with 90% or more non-Latino white populations.

Health effects of diesel exhaust

Diesel exhaust contains sooty particles, most of which are small enough, when inhaled, to carry as many as 44 toxics into the blood stream and throughout the body. These particles have been detected in the brain and in mother's placentas. Infants, children, and workers exposed to diesel at close range, are at highest risk of harm. Known and suspected health effects include:



Oregon can avoid **465 premature deaths** and save **\$3.5 billion** in health costs each year by retiring old diesel engines.

Diesel soot is also North America's most significant source of "black carbon"—a potent but short-lived climate forcer. These fine particles in diesel exhaust absorb solar radiation and emit it as heat, causing snow and ice to melt quicker. Because they affect the properties of clouds, these particles also affect precipitation. Unlike carbon dioxide, which can stay in the atmosphere for centuries, black carbon remains in the air for just a few weeks. So reducing black carbon now results in almost immediate benefits to our climate (and is in alignment with the Multnomah County 2015 Climate Action Plan).

OEC published a report in 2016 (attached to this testimony) that details the health impacts of diesel pollution, why Oregon has fallen behind on protecting its residents, and how the problem can be addressed. Our report and numerous health studies make it clear that Oregon will continue to pay a high price for diesel exhaust for decades longer unless we take action soon.

The Oregon Legislature has not yet acted to protect Oregonians statewide, so we thank you for stepping up to protect Multnomah County residents. Today you can affirm your support for one simple and powerful action: a construction procurement policy to accelerate the cleanup of off-road engines used in public contracts.

This proposed procurement policy has been well vetted. It was developed in a transparent and inclusive way and includes measures to ensure that certified Disadvantaged, Minority, Women and Emerging Small Businesses firms are not harmed. Multnomah County has upgraded its own fleet of construction equipment, and the policy has already been piloted in local construction projects.

We urge you to adopt the resolution in front of you today that will affirm the County's intent to move forward with such a policy. In doing so you will put the County on the path to a win-win diesel pollution solution that protects residents' health, addresses environmental justice, and combats climate change.



Oregon
Environmental
Council

222 NW Davis Street, Suite 309
Portland, OR 97209-3900
503.222.1963
OEOnline.org | [@OEOnline](https://twitter.com/OEOnline)