Construction vehicles and equipment are a major source of diesel pollution. The construction industry uses more diesel engines than any other sector. Nationwide, there are over 2 million pieces of construction equipment and most lack pollution controls. In Cook County, approximately 30% of diesel pollution comes from construction equipment.

What are the health impacts from construction equipment?
Diesel-powered construction equipment can be a serious public health threat as diesel exhaust contains over 40 toxic air contaminants, carcinogens, ozone smog-forming compounds, and fine particulate matter (“soot”). Exposure to fine particles is known to cause asthma attacks, heart attacks, lung cancer, stroke, and premature death. In the Chicago metropolitan area, it is estimated that fine particles from diesel engines cause 723 deaths, 1,125 heart attacks, 511 cases of chronic bronchitis, and 28,201 asthma attacks each year.

What are the solutions?
• **Switch to cleaner fuels.** Using cleaner fuels, such as ultra-low sulfur diesel fuel (ULSD), can reduce soot pollution by 5-9%.
• **Retrofit vehicles and equipment.** Installing pollution controls, like diesel particulate filters, can achieve immediate and significant reductions in diesel pollution. Diesel particulate filters can reduce soot pollution by up to 90%.
• **Replace.** Replacing old construction equipment with a new lower-emission model ahead of schedule can result in significant pollution reductions. Replacing old equipment can also reduce fuel and maintenance costs.
• **Repower.** Repowering construction equipment to cleaner US EPA emission tiers can result in considerable pollution reductions.

**Chicago Should Pass a Strong Green Construction Ordinance**
Numerous states, cities, counties and public agencies, including New York City, San Francisco and Cook County in IL, have taken strong action to reduce diesel pollution by passing “green construction requirements,” which require contractors working on public construction projects to use cleaner diesel fuel and pollution controls on their diesel vehicles and equipment. Some elements of green contracting were also adopted by the O’Hare Modernization Project. In moving forward, the City of Chicago should pass a strong green construction ordinance aimed at cleaning up diesel-powered vehicles and construction equipment used on City-funded construction projects! Diesel exhaust is deadly. There’s no reason to delay!

For more information about green construction, please contact Ashley Collins, Respiratory Health Association of Metropolitan Chicago, at 312-628-0202, or Jonathan Doster, Citizen Action/Illinois, at 312-427-2114 ext. 206.

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