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LA Ports Meet Clean Air Goals Years Ahead of Schedule

Clean Truck Fleet Key to Ending Diesel Death Zone in Ports of Los Angeles, Long Beach

LOS ANGELES (October 1, 2009) – Today, a year after the Clean Truck Programs (CTP) launched at the ports of Los Angeles and Long Beach, more than 2,000 polluting trucks are off the road and more than 5,500 clean trucks are in operation. The ports are two years ahead of their goal to reduce truck-produced emissions by 80%, according to the Natural Resources Defense Council (NRDC). To date, the programs have reduced emissions equal to the amount produced by 200,000 cars every year.

“Los Angeles is home to the worst air pollution in the country, which plays a role in thousands of heart attacks, respiratory ailments and deaths every year,” said David Pettit, senior attorney with NRDC. “Knowing those statistics, the Port of Los Angeles decided to take proactive and permanent action to reduce those deaths and invest in sustainable jobs at the ports. Today, hundreds of lives will have been saved and thousands of children will not contract asthma or chronic respiratory disease in Los Angeles thanks to the clean truck programs enacted one year ago by the Ports of Los Angeles and Long Beach.”

Diesel particulate matter is associated with heart attacks, asthma, chronic bronchitis, premature mortality, increased cancer risk and other serious health ailments. Children and the elderly are particularly susceptible to these health risks. In fact, prior to the ports’ adoption of the program, the port trucking system imposed up to \$1.7 billion of costs on the public every year in the form of operational inefficiencies, community impacts and, above all, impacts on public health.

“Before the program, diesel trucks that serviced the ports were some of the oldest and most polluting trucks on the road and were the largest source of on-shore diesel particulate matter in California,” said Melissa Lin Perrella, staff attorney, NRDC. “Now, thousands of those trucks are running cleaner and producing far less diesel pollution responsible for claiming hundreds of lives.”

Over the course of less than one year, the CTP has significantly reduced air pollution at the ports and in communities along freight transportation corridors—so much so that the ports’ goal of reducing truck emissions by 80% by 2012 will likely be achieved by next year. This is the only program at the ports that has effectively reduced air pollution from port trucking.

Background:

The Clean Truck Programs are designed to significantly reduce truck-related emissions and manage and maintain these trucks long-term. Ports around the country recognize the need for a sustainable trucking workforce and are mobilizing to implement clean truck programs locally.

The Port of Oakland is banning dirty trucks starting this fall, and New York and New Jersey ports are also working with their local Harbor Commissions to introduce similar clean truck programs.

An estimated \$1.6 billion dollars is invested to replace an aging fleet of 17,000 trucks with newer, cleaner vehicles at the ports of Los Angeles and Long Beach before 2012. In February, the ports began collecting a \$35 container fee applied to each 20-foot container to offset financing costs to purchase the clean trucks. Both ports expect the fund created by the \$35 fee will allow them to subsidize up to 80 percent of each new truck.

In April, U.S. District Court Judge Christina A. Snyder denied a request by the American Trucking Association (ATA) to grant a preliminary injunction that would have devastated the clean truck plans. Although a provision of the Port of Los Angeles plan requiring a phase-in of employee drivers rather than independent owner-operators was put on hold pending a February, 2010 trial, the requirements that port-serving trucks be safe and adequately maintained were upheld. The requirement that trucks meet stringent emissions limits and the funding mechanism set up by the ports to replace the 17,000 old, dirty trucks that carry cargo to and from Long Beach and San Pedro are also intact.

Nevertheless, ATA's lawsuit threatens the long-term success of the program. ATA asserts that the outdated Federal Aviation Administration Authorization Act (FAAAA) of 1994 prevents ports from requiring that licensed motor carriers meet minimal safety, environment and security-based standards if they want to access port property.

The ports, NRDC, Sierra Club and the Coalition for Clean Air continue to fight ATA's lawsuit in federal court, and are working with federal legislators to update the FAAAA to protect the Clean Truck Programs and the ability of ports across the country to adopt similar long-term clean air strategies.

The Clean Truck Programs are part of a larger Clean Air Action Plan currently underway by the ports of Los Angeles and Long Beach in an effort to expand the ports' business operations and also reduce harmful air pollution impacts on the local port community and environment. The ports have numerous expansion projects planned during the next several years and some experts expect to see port commerce double or triple by 2020.

Relevant Links:

[10/1/2008](#) - Historic Clean Trucks Plans Roll Through Ports of LA and Long Beach

[4/29/2009](#) - SoCal Ports' Clean Truck Plans Overcome Court Challenge

Read David Pettit's blog on port air pollution: <http://switchboard.nrdc.org/blogs/dpettit/>

Read Melissa Lin Perrella's blog at: <http://switchboard.nrdc.org/blogs/mmlinperrella/>

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The Natural Resources Defense Council is a national, nonprofit organization of scientists, lawyers and environmental specialists dedicated to protecting public health and the environment. Founded in 1970, NRDC has 1.2 million members and online activists, served from offices in New York, Washington, Chicago, Los Angeles, San Francisco and Beijing.