

EPA REJECTION OF CALIFORNIA CLEAN CARS STANDARDS THREATENS PUBLIC HEALTH

Major Studies Show Global Warming Will Worsen Ozone Pollution as Senate Committee Commences Hearings into EPA Decision

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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(Los Angeles – January 10, 2007) – The U.S. Environmental Protection Agency’s (EPA’s) recent refusal to allow California to regulate greenhouse gases from motor vehicles, the largest single source of global warming pollution in California, has adverse consequences for the health of California’s urban residents, especially children and the elderly. That’s the conclusion of an assessment of major studies that have examined the implications of global warming for urban smog. The analysis was released on the same day that Senate Environment and Public Works Committee Chair Barbara Boxer (D-CA) holds a hearing in smog-plagued Los Angeles examining the EPA’s decision. The new assessment is attached.

The assessment of independent studies shows that global warming is predicted to substantially increase ozone in urban areas. Ninety percent of California residents live in areas that violate the state air quality standard for either ground-level ozone or particulate matter.

Ozone is a strong oxidizing gas that chemically burns the cells lining the respiratory tract. Exposure to ozone can cause shortness of breath, wheezing, coughing, and lung inflammation. Researchers have documented increases in hospital admissions, asthma development and even premature mortality associated with exposure to ozone.

The studies reviewed by Environmental Defense were published in the well-regarded medical journals including: *Proceedings of the National Academy of Science*, *Lancet*, and the *American Journal of Respiratory and Critical Care Medicine*. The review also included studies conducted by the California Air Resources Board (CARB), the California Climate Change Center and EPA.

Particularly compelling were the projected health impacts on children, the elderly and those with lower income if the no action is taken to curb heat-trapping gases.

Children are particularly vulnerable to the adverse effects of ozone pollution. Active children in Southern California communities with high ozone levels are more likely to develop asthma. Long-term exposure to ground-level ozone is also associated with decreased lung development in California college students. Recently, the California Children's Health Study analyzed the relationship between lung function in 1,700 children and their community's air pollution over a four year period. Decreases in lung function were observed in children who reported spending more time outdoors.

"We have a responsibility to ensure that the health of our citizens is protected from global warming and urban smog," said Janea Scott, an Environmental Defense attorney in Los Angeles. "Los Angeles residents suffer from some of the worst air pollution in the country, so it is common sense that we use all available solutions to protect human health from automobile emissions."

The heat spells anticipated if greenhouse gas pollution continues unabated will increase the risk of death from dehydration, heat stroke, exhaustion, heart attack, stroke and respiratory distress. Extreme heat events in urban centers such as Sacramento, Los Angeles and San Bernardino could increase heat-related deaths by two to three times over current levels. Low socioeconomic status confers an additional burden because it restricts access to air conditioning and medical assistance.

During the Senate Environment and Public Works Committee hearing on the EPA decision today in Los Angeles, Environmental Defense staff will be on hand to answer questions or to comment on the health threats from global warming as well as legal challenges to the EPA's decision. The hearing will be held at 10:00 a.m. Pacific Time in the Los Angeles City Hall, City Council Chamber, Room 303, 200 North Spring Street, Los Angeles, CA 90012.

Environmental Defense and four other conservation groups are challenging the EPA's decision in federal court. The petitioners - the Conservation Law Foundation, Environmental Defense, International Center for Technology Assessment, Natural Resources Defense Counsel (NRDC) and the Sierra Club - filed the suit in the United States Court of Appeals for the Ninth Circuit in San Francisco. The State of California also filed its own legal challenge to EPA's decision in the same court.

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