

Diesel Exposure May Increase Cancer Risk For Drivers, Dockworkers, NCI Study Says

By Eric Miller
Staff Reporter

Truck drivers and dockworkers routinely exposed to diesel and other vehicle exhaust have an increased risk of dying from lung cancer, and the risk increases the longer a worker stays on the job, according to a new study of 31,000 members of the Teamsters union.

The study was funded by the National Institutes of Health and the National Cancer Institute. It was conducted by Eric Garshick, principal investigator for research grants for NCI and assistant professor of

medicine at Harvard Medical School.

The findings were presented to the California Air Resources Board on Dec. 11, shortly before the agency began a public hearing on two new heavy-duty truck emission regulations. CARB approved the rules the following day.

Researchers looked at detailed

work records and death records of longhaul and pickup-and-delivery drivers, as well as dockworkers older than age 39. The union members involved in the analysis had worked an average of 22 years, with 73% of them employed 20 to 40 years in the industry.

Among the workers studied,

4,306 deaths were recorded, with 779 blamed on lung cancer. The researchers "indirectly adjusted for cigarette smoking based on an industry survey."

The increased risk associated with 20 years on the job for truckers and dockworkers, when compared with workers in other industries, ranged from 65% to 120%, the study concluded.

A national mortality database from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention shows that for white males aged 15-64, the truck-

ing industry had lung cancer rates among the five highest of all surveyed industries, Cynthia Garcia, a California air pollution scientist, told the board.

"These results imply that reduction of diesel particulate emissions will have health benefits associated with job-specific exposures to diesel and other vehicle exhaust in the trucking industry," Garcia said.

She said a separate study she had presented to CARB in January suggested that truckers also have an elevated risk for heart disease.