Facts Sheet – Health Effects of Diesel Exhaust Emissions

- In 1998, California identified diesel particulate matter as a toxic air contaminant.
- In 2000, the ARB approved a Diesel Risk Reduction Plan. The Plan is to reduce diesel PM emissions and the associated health risk by 75% in 2010 and 85% by 2020.
- There are about 1,250,000 diesel-fueled engines and vehicles in California. These include trucks, buses, bulldozers, tractors, portable equipment, cranes, refrigerated units, and stationary engines.
- Diesel PM includes "soot" and over 40 other known cancer-causing substances.
- Each year in California, diesel PM contributes up to 24,000 premature deaths and thousands of hospital admissions, asthma attacks and other respiratory symptoms.
- Diesel PM exposure may facilitate development of new allergies.
- Many diesel emission sources are concentrated near densely populated areas such as ports, rail yards and heavily traveled roadways.
- Most diesel PM is less than 1 microgram in diameter (1/70th the diameter of a human hair).
- Proposition 65 (the Safe Drinking Water and Toxic Enforcement Act of 1986) identified diesel exhaust as a chemical known to cause cancer.
- Each year, premature deaths from diesel PM is estimated to be $16 billion and $3.5 billion for hospitalizations, the treatment of illnesses and lost workdays.
- Diesels constitute only about 5% of road vehicles, but, can contribute from 10% to 75% of visibility degradation in urban areas.
- Diesel engines emit more than half the black carbon emissions (a strong absorber of solar radiation) in the U.S. and about 30% globally. It is the second biggest contributor to global warming, about 60% of carbon dioxide.
- Each year, diesel PM causes about 250 excess cancer cases in California.