

...Dirty Diesel: Non-road diesel engines are the dirtiest

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 bution of diesel particulates as all the over-the-road trucks. Cleaner, low-sulfur diesel fuel is required for diesel engines on the highways, but not yet for off-road diesel engines like heavy construction equipment.

"Nobody disputes that there's a problem with exhaust from diesel engines," Downing said. "It's just that for many folks, it's like 'tomorrow's another day, and I'll worry about it then.'"

One hurdle is that it can cost \$1,200 to \$12,000 per vehicle to install the fil-

ters and catalytic converters that reduce harmful exhaust. However, there are federal grants available to help with that, Downing said, and Oregon has state business income tax credits that reimburse half the cost of replacing or retrofitting diesel engines.

The recently-passed federal stimulus bill included \$300 million for "Clean Diesel" projects, mainly in the form of grants to diesel fleet owners to pay part of the cost of retrofitting engines. Locally, the Port of Vancouver will get \$357,500 to retrofit engines on trucks, loaders, and forklifts. And TriMet will get \$400,000 to retrofit engines on 29 buses.

"I think there's an opportunity for unions to work with us to develop the partnership relationships we need with these fleets to raise the priority," Downing said.

In some areas, the International Longshore and Warehouse Union has made an issue of diesel exhaust, working in coalition with community groups to get ships, trains and trucks to turn off their engines when not in use.

There's not much that individual workers can do to reduce risk. Ordinary dust masks don't stop the fine particles that are the problem. The one exception is when workers turn engines off that are not in use. Downing said it's a myth that diesel engines need to be kept run-

ning all the time.

Anti-idling campaigns aim to make turning engines off a worker habit — and workplace policy. They've had particular success at school districts. The Oregon Department of Education encourages all school districts to have no-idling policies for school buses — especially when they're lined up outside schools. And a bill in the Oregon House of Representatives would carry the ball further. House Bill 2186 would authorize the DEQ to write rules restricting engine use by parked medium-duty and

heavy-duty trucks and by commercial ships while at port, and require truck stops and ports to make electric power available as an alternative to engine use.

"When I first started doing this," Downing said, "I really had to scramble. People were very skeptical. Everybody was interested in being second, but very few were interested in being first."

Now, Downing said, interest is growing. "We've been doing this for a few years. Word's getting around."

AFL-CIO's John Sweeney says he'll retire in September

WASHINGTON, D.C. (PAL) — AFL-CIO President John Sweeney announced that he will retire at the AFL-CIO Convention in September. Sweeney's statement came at an April 6 meeting of the AFL-CIO's Executive Committee.

Sweeney's retirement was expected. The former Service Employees International Union president, who will turn 75 in May, has led the AFL-CIO since 1995, when his slate ousted incumbent Tom Donohue, who had taken over months before, following the retirement of President Lane Kirkland.

The announcement also comes at a time when the AFL-CIO has opened a dialogue with the Change To Win labor federation for possible reunification. Seven international unions left the AFL-CIO in 2005 over differences in political spending and organizing.

David Bonior, chair of the labor-funded American Rights At Work, has been leading the reunification discussions, which also includes the 3.2 million member National Education Association.



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