

FACT SHEET

Reducing exposure to diesel/petrol exhaust emissions in the agriculture industry



Exposure to diesel and petrol exhaust emissions has been identified as an emerging health risk in the agriculture industry.

In June 2012, the International Agency for Research on Cancer (IARC) classified diesel engine exhaust fumes as carcinogenic to humans (Group 1 carcinogen). Diesel exhaust is a mixture of fine carbon particles (soot) and a number of toxic gases and chemicals. These harmful substances can be inhaled deep into the lungs.

Short-term exposure can cause health effects including nausea and loss of coordination. Long term exposure can increase the risk of premature death from heart and lung disease.

Benzene is a significant component of petrol (approximately 5 per cent) and is a confirmed carcinogen. Short term benzene exposure can interfere with the human body's central nervous systems. Long-term exposure can cause leukaemia.

One of the best ways to stay safe from the effects of these emissions is to use safer engines and cleaner fuels – eg low emission technology, emission control devices such as particle filters, ultra-low sulphur diesel, compressed natural gas or electricity.

Next steps

Prevention is better than cure. It is always best to be aware of the chemicals you are using and what symptoms to look for. Follow these simple steps:

- Talk to your employer.
- Read the safety data sheets (SDS) for each chemical you use.
- Make relevant changes in the workplace:
 - Substitute with safer engines and cleaner fuels where possible.
 - Isolate areas of the workplace where emissions are present.
 - Plan and schedule work to minimise the length of time workers are exposed to emissions.
 - Regularly maintain all vehicles and plant.
 - Fit emission reducing devices (air cleaners) to engines.
 - Ensure there is adequate ventilation.
- Talk your doctor about:
 - your past and current occupations
 - any change you have noticed in your body
 - your lifestyle – eg smoking can escalate symptoms
 - medical tests that may be required.

For more information, call 13 10 50 or visit workcover.nsw.gov.au

The NSW Environment Protection Agency (EPA) is also running the Clean Machine Program for non-road diesel vehicles. Under this program the EPA is working with industry to implement procurement of low emission equipment and to demonstrate particle emissions reductions achievable through retrofit of diesel particle filters on heavily polluting machines. More information on the NSW EPA program is available at epa.nsw.gov.au.

Disclaimer

This publication may contain work health and safety and workers compensation information. It may include some of your obligations under the various legislations that WorkCover NSW administers. To ensure you comply with your legal obligations you must refer to the appropriate legislation.

Information on the latest laws can be checked by visiting the NSW legislation website legislation.nsw.gov.au

This publication does not represent a comprehensive statement of the law as it applies to particular problems or to individuals or as a substitute for legal advice. You should seek independent legal advice if you need assistance on the application of the law to your situation.

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Catalogue No. **WC01605** WorkCover Publications Hotline **1300 799 003**

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ISBN 978 1 74341 597 9 ©Copyright WorkCover NSW 1114