



February 19, 2014

President Barack Obama  
The White House  
1600 Pennsylvania Avenue Northwest  
Washington DC 20500

Dear Mr. President:

As medical and health professionals who care deeply about people with lung disease, including many who are involved in the science of air pollution effects, we are writing to urge you to direct the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) to adopt lower sulfur gasoline and cleaner vehicle emissions standards and to implement the standards as soon as possible. Cars, light trucks, and SUVs remain a major source of nitrogen oxides, carbon monoxide, and volatile organic compounds that directly harm health and also lead to the formation of ground-level ozone and particle pollution. Unhealthy air imposes the risk of serious health impacts on millions of Americans. We see those impacts on our patients' health, in public health, and in our research.

The EPA's proposed Tier 3 Vehicle Emissions and Fuel Standards will significantly reduce ozone and particulate matter that harms cardiovascular and respiratory health and can even lead to early death. Ozone acts as a powerful respiratory irritant, causing premature death, asthma attacks, inflammation of lung tissue, shortness of breath, wheezing, increased susceptibility to respiratory infections, risk of cardiovascular harm and lower birth weight. Exposure to particle pollution causes premature death, cardiovascular harm, diminished lung function, asthma attacks, increased risk of lung cancer, and increased risk of lower birth weight and infant mortality.

We know the burden of air pollution is not equal. For people with existing diseases such as asthma, heart disease, chronic obstructive pulmonary disease (COPD) and diabetes, air pollution can increase the burden they face every day. Children, whose lungs continue to grow into adolescence, face a higher risk from the effects of air pollution. Adults 65 and older, whose bodies are less able to defend against the effects of air pollution, are placed under greater strain. People with low incomes also face higher risks from air pollution.

Traffic-related air pollution causes asthma attacks, may cause the onset of childhood asthma and is linked to premature death ([HEI 2010](#)). Nearly 1 in 5 U.S. residents live near a major roadway, elevating their risk from traffic pollution. People who belong to a racial or ethnic minority or who have lower incomes are more likely to live near busy roadways ([Rowangould 2013](#)).

Cleaner gasoline alone will immediately benefit public health. Lower sulfur gasoline enables current emissions reduction technologies to function more efficiently, reducing nitrogen oxide emissions from the existing fleet. Cleaner gasoline will reduce emissions equal to removing the emissions from 33 million cars off the road, or about as many cars as there are in Maryland, New York, Ohio, Pennsylvania, Texas and Washington. Combined with tailpipe emissions standards, the proposed program will save thousands of lives each year, prevent tens of thousands of asthma attacks, and reduce the number of emergency room visits and hospitalizations.

Cleaner gasoline and vehicle standards are urgently needed. Mr. President, we request that you direct the EPA to adopt new standards that will protect the health of our patients and the public and implement the lifesaving program on schedule.

Sincerely,

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