

15 July 2015

Official | Air pollution killed 9,400 Londoners in 2010

In a major related development, the European Parliament's Environment Committee voted this morning to tighten the European Commission's proposals for a new National Emissions Ceilings Directive including binding limits in 2025

Spotlight turns to Government as it tries to comply with a Supreme Court order to publish a new plan within weeks to comply with nitrogen dioxide limit values as soon as possible not beyond 2030 as currently

London becomes the first world city to quantify the health effects of nitrogen dioxide (NO₂).

<http://london.gov.uk/media/mayor-press-releases/2015/07/london-becomes-first-world-city-to-quantify-the-health-effects>

The Mayor estimates 3,500 deaths attributable to dangerous airborne particles (PM_{2.5}) and an additional 5,900 from NO₂, a toxic gas, in 2010 making a total of 9,400 deaths attributable to long-term exposure to air pollution in London in 2010. Each such death is likely to have been about 12 years early.

These numbers are statistically correct, so they can be compared with other public health risks such as alcoholism, obesity and smoking, but they may understate the impact of air pollution which affects everyone to some extent. In practice, more people are likely to lose fewer additional years each.

Other health impacts and pollutants, such as ozone and sulphur dioxide, are excluded from these calculations.

Quotes

Simon Birkett, Founder and Director of Clean Air in London, said:

“Clean Air in London applauds Boris for leading the world by publishing the first estimates for the number of deaths attributable to nitrogen dioxide (NO₂) as he famously did for particles in 2010.

“These estimates will send shockwaves around the world. We were expecting bad news given scientists say many roads in central London will tend to have the highest concentrations of NO₂ in the world and levels in Oxford Street are well over three times the legal limit that have been in legislation since 1999 to be met by 2010. **But these numbers are much worse than the 7,500 total deaths attributable to long-term exposure to air pollution that we estimated from the Mayor's Ultra Low Emission Zone consultation documents late last year.**

“It's hard to grasp the scale of a public health problem that is responsible statistically for 9,400 out of 48,297 actual deaths in London in 2010 i.e. 19.7% or one in five of all deaths. There can no longer be any doubt – air pollution affects all of us and the vulnerable most.

“The Government told the Supreme Court that road transport is responsible for about 80% of the breaches of legal limits and World Health Organisation guidelines for NO₂ in 38 of the UK’s 43 zones. The Mayor has also estimated that about 90% of NO₂ exhaust emissions come from diesel vehicles and 82% of emissions of NO₂ are generated within London compared to 24% of PM_{2.5}. The bottom line is that diesel vehicles are the biggest and most deadly single source of air pollution within London.

“In a major related development, the European Parliament’s Environment Committee voted this morning to tighten the European Commission’s proposals for a new National Emissions Ceilings Directive including binding limits in 2025.

“These developments put the spotlight on the Government as never before as it considers expanding Heathrow and tries to comply with a Supreme Court order to submit a plan to the European Commission before the end of the year to comply with NO₂ limits as soon as possible instead of beyond 2030 as currently.

“We must ensure that today’s news means the death of diesel in the capital not the deaths of Londoners. Let’s ban diesel from the most polluted places by 2018 as we banned coal burning so successfully almost exactly 60 years ago.”

ENDS

Notes

1. Nitrogen dioxide levels in Oxford Street in 2015

<http://www.londonair.org.uk/london/asp/news.asp?NewsId=OxfordStHighNO2&StartIndex=31>

<http://cleanair.london/sources/oxford-street-has-breached-nitrogen-dioxide-hourly-limit-value-for-2015/>

http://www.londonair.org.uk/london/asp/publicstats.asp?region=0&site=WM6&la_id=&network=All&postcode=&MapType=Google&VenueCode=

2. Health studies

<http://cleanair.london/sources/mayor-publishes-health-study-revealing-deaths-attributable-to-no2/>

<http://cleanair.london/health/mayor-johnson-publishes-health-study-estimating-4267-premature-deaths/>

3. C-minus for London

<http://cleanair.london/solutions/mayor-gets-c-minus-in-new-ranking-of-air-quality-in-23-european-cities/>

4. ClientEarth legal case

<http://cleanair.london/legal/major-victory-for-clientearth-enforcing-nitrogen-dioxide-laws/>

5. Diesel exhaust

<http://cleanair.london/sources/carcinogenic-diesel-exhaust-disclosed-for-every-significant-road-in-london/>

6. How polluted is my road?

<http://www.howpollutedismyroad.org.uk/index.php>

7. ASA ruling

<http://cleanair.london/legal/asa-says-tfl-made-misleading-claim-in-ulez-advertisement/>

8. Kings College London – Quantification methods for health effects of NO₂

http://www.londonair.org.uk/london/asp/LAQNSeminar/pdf/July2015/Heather_Walton_Quantification_method_for_health_effects_of_NO2.pdf

9. Public Health Indicators

<http://www.phoutcomes.info/public-health-outcomes-framework#gid/1000043/pat/6/ati/102/page/3/par/E12000004/are/E06000015/iid/30101/age/230/sx/4>

https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/332854/PHE_CRC_E_010.pdf

10. Health information

<http://erj.ersjournals.com/content/early/2014/02/20/09031936.00114713.abstract>

11. National Emissions Ceilings Directive

<http://www.eeb.org/index.cfm/news-events/news/european-parliament-votes-for-a-breath-of-fresh-air/>

12. World Health Organisation publications

<http://www.euro.who.int/en/health-topics/environment-and-health/air-quality/publications/2013/health-risks-of-air-pollution-in-europe-hrapie-project.-new-emerging-risks-to-health-from-air-pollution-results-from-the-survey-of-experts>