

OAKLAND: STUDY SAYS INDUSTRY CAUSES HEALTH PROBLEMS IN EAST OAKLAND

OAKLAND (BCN)

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An Oakland-based advocacy group says a new study outlines the public health and environmental effects of having a high concentration of industry near residential areas in the Hegenberger Road corridor in East Oakland.

Officials with Communities for a Better Environment say the report concludes there is a lack of health protective services for East Oakland residents and that local regulatory agencies have major gaps in their emission inventories of pollution sources, such as idling diesel trucks.

A news conference will be held today regarding the report, which finds that East Oakland has 216 stationary sources of pollution and 49 environmental hazard spots located near schools, where children play, and senior citizen centers, according to the advocacy group.

The report also says the Bay Area's air quality may be in violation of stricter new federal health standards, suggesting the region is headed toward a failing grade in meeting the nation's new yardstick for clean air.

Rachel Morello-Frosch, an associate professor in the University of California, Berkeley's Department of Environmental Science, Policy and Management, said in a statement, "Air pollution control agencies and the city of Oakland should take effective steps to address cumulative impacts of multiple pollution sources in vulnerable communities like East Oakland."

Morello-Frosch said, "The question now remains as to how regional and state air quality agencies and the city will use this new knowledge to better protect community health."

Anna Yun Lee, a staff researcher and scientist at Citizens for a Better Environment said, the report recommends that residential communities reduce diesel truck emissions, air quality agencies should reexamine emissions inventory and hazards lists, and land use and air quality agencies should modify standards to protect public health.

The report says the regulatory agencies that have gaps in their emission inventories of pollution sources are the Bay Area Air Quality Management District and the California Air Resource Board.

Lee said that although the report is critical of the California Air Resource Board, the agency helped fund the study and she thinks it will be willing to update their data-gathering techniques.

In addition to the California Air Resource Board, the report was done in partnership with Manuel Pastor of the University of Southern California's Program for Environmental and Regional Equity; James Sadd, associate professor of environmental science at Occidental College; and Morello-Frosch, who is currently at UC-Berkeley and was formerly an assistant professor at the Center for Environmental Studies and the Department of Community Health at Brown University.

Lee said that although it's well known that heavy truck and rail traffic at the Port of Oakland cause public health problems in West Oakland, it's not as well known that East Oakland faces similar health problems because of traffic on Interstate Highway 880, a heavy concentration of auto body shops and heavy industry.

The study will be discussed at a news conference at the Tassafaronga Recreation Center at 975 85th Ave. in Oakland at 5:30 p.m. today.

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