



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE: October 7, 2009

CONTACT: David West
206-568-5000, Ext. 13
206-919-2774 (mobile)

New survey shows Port of Seattle neighbors are deeply concerned over health effects of port truck traffic

SEATTLE — A majority of Georgetown and South Park residents believe trucks and other Port of Seattle operations are making them ill, according to a recent survey.

[Puget Sound Sage](#) today released data showing that 63 percent of Georgetown and South Park residents surveyed believe emissions from Port of Seattle trucks are making them sick; 56 percent believe truck traffic and poor truck management pose a danger to pedestrians and car drivers; and 75 percent of survey participants want the port to reduce the pollution, noise, and pedestrian and traffic safety hazards it causes. The door-to-door survey of 230 households was conducted summer of 2009. (See enclosed survey overview for more detail.)

“For the past three years, the Port of Seattle has ignored community pleas at public hearings for a health impact study of port trucking,” said Puget Sound Sage Executive Director David West. “In the absence of a port response, residents are taking matters into their own hands, starting with the survey and likely continuing with a public proposal for a comprehensive health study of the neighborhood.”

Neighbors’ health concerns are not hypochondriacal, West said. Just two examples:

- According to Public Health – Seattle & King County, children in the South Park, Georgetown and Beacon Hill area have the highest asthma hospitalization rate in King County, and residents of these neighborhoods can expect to die an average of 2.5 years sooner than other King County residents.
- The Puget Sound Clean Air Agency reports that the average particulate matter concentration in Georgetown and South Park is the highest in King County, and for Seattle and Tacoma residents living close to freeways, ports or industrial areas, the risk of getting cancer from breathing toxic air pollutants is more than 27 times higher than the national average — 1,000 potential cases per million people as compared with 36 potential cases per million. (See information on pollution and cancer risk in Georgetown and South Park, link provided below.)

(more)

"Once again, lower income communities and communities of color are dealing disproportionately with the impacts of heavy port trucks and airplanes," said Joyce Tseng, [Community Coalition for Environmental Justice](#) board member. "We know diesel pollution is a major risk factor for cancer and asthma. The port needs to do more to study the local effects on these small neighborhoods, but they have refused to do so."

"If we are truly serious about our environment, there is no better place to start than in those communities that have taken a disproportionate toll health-wise by living under such conditions," said King County Councilmember Larry Gossett.

"Georgetown and South Park residents have waited long enough," said Seattle City Councilmember Nick Licata. "It's long past time for the Seattle Port Commission to lead in reducing air pollution."

Residents of Georgetown and South Park also have asked the port to institute a comprehensive Clean Trucks Plan, like the one used so successfully at the Port of Los Angeles, but to no avail, West said.

"Current port plans require low-income, independent, contracted truck drivers to foot the cost of retrofitting their rigs so they release fewer emissions, or of buying new rigs at \$100,000 a pop," West said. "This won't work. These independent drivers cannot afford to pay for retrofitting. It will only delay a realistic pollution solution for years."

"The port's current plan to clean up diesel pollution is deeply flawed," agreed Brady Montz, chair of the Sierra Club's Seattle Group. "We're facing daily doses of highly toxic diesel soot in our homes, schools and parks for years to come, and there's no evidence that the port's plan will work."

Truckers make an estimated 3,000 trips per day to and from the docks at the Port of Seattle, according to port figures. Many of these trucks drive through Georgetown and South Park, park on local streets overnight, and stop at related businesses in the neighborhood such as truck and trailer repair shops and container storage companies, often leaving their trucks idling and filling the air with toxins and noise.

(more)

“A hallmark of good public leadership is listening, and the port clearly hasn’t been listening to this community,” said West. “The price for this leadership failure by port officials is being paid by the families in this community. Port neighbors have a right to know what port activities are doing to their health, and a right to ask the port to behave more responsibly.”

Individual phone and in-person interviews with residents affected by port trucks can be arranged.

Puget Sound Sage is a Seattle nonprofit organization that uses research, policy analysis and community organizing to win public policies and development agreements that promote good jobs, workers' rights, affordable housing and a clean and safe environment. Sage and the Community Coalition for Environmental Justice (CCEJ) are part of the Washington Coalition for Clean and Safe Ports. This coalition was organized in 2007 to significantly reduce the air pollution caused by trucks serving the Port of Seattle, and to improve working conditions for the drivers of those trucks. For more information on this effort, visit www.pugetsoundsage.org. For more information on CCEJ, go to www.ccej.org.

###

Related documents:

[Community Health Impact Survey Overview](#)

[Public Health Community Health Indicators Table](#)

[Pollution and Cancer Risk in Georgetown, South Park](#)

[Port Emissions Solutions](#)