

To the Illinois Pollution Control Board:

The big snow storm that southern Illinois experienced the first week end in January of this year was an eye opener. The mounds of snow that were created from plowing the streets and parking lots were some of the biggest I can remember. Cold temperatures followed the snow event and the mounds of snow around our city did not melt for several weeks. During this time, the snow mounds accumulated the low-lying pollution created by the exhaust of cars and trucks. I am sure other types of pollution were in play as well. Particulate matter is created by tires as they run across asphalt and cement and kick up into the air and circulate. I watched, in horror, over several weeks as the mounds at first looked speckled with black soot. Within a week or so, the mounds of snow were totally saturated with the particulate matter with not one white spot showing. I have been overwhelmed with grief over what I saw.

Vehicle exhaust quite literally, is destroying the quality of our lives. Research tells us that vehicle exhaust particulate matter not only causes respiratory ailments, it also makes its way to the brain and increases the risk for TIAs (transient ischemic attacks), hemorrhagic stroke, cognitive deficits, dementia, Alzheimer's, and Parkinson's diseases. The pollution inflames our nerve cells. Blood vessels that are connected to the inflamed nerve cells become damaged. The function of structures inside of the inflamed nerve cells become altered. The chemical functions of the cell no longer operate properly. Air pollution also impacts male fertility. It diminishes the number and quality of sperm, reduces the movement of sperm, and increases DNA damage.

We can make choices for ourselves to help diminish our creation of and exposure to particulate matter. We can drive less and use more public transportation. We can drive an electric vehicle. If we are still driving combustion engine vehicles, we can avoid idling. We can maintain our vehicles, and drive smarter. All of this sounds good, but it is not enough.

The Federal Environmental Protection Agency's new rules for restricting the amount of fine particulate matter released into the air moves the current annually allowed amount from 12 micrograms per cubic meter of air to 9 micrograms per

cubic meter of air. Illinois could do better and reduce this amount even further. Illinois could continue educating the public about driving electric vehicles. Illinois could create more mass transit and focus on friendly walking and bike paths. Illinois could recommend that warehouse facilities strengthen their pollution reducing strategies. **Illinois could be an example to other states that care about people's health.**

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