

Institute for Policy Integrity
At New York University School of Law

For Immediate Release
May 27, 2010

Contact Edna Ishayik:
(212) 998-6085
ednai@nyu.edu

ANALYSIS: MORE UNTIMELY DEATHS CAUSED BY NYC AIR POLLUTION THAN PREVIOUSLY ESTIMATED

City Council to hold hearing on law that removes toxins from our air

New York City, May 27—Up to 259 lives could be saved every year if certain large buildings in New York City stopped burning dirty heating oil. Using newly available data, a reworked [analysis](#) released this morning by the Institute for Policy Integrity at New York University School of Law (Policy Integrity) finds that the polluting fuel has even greater consequences than estimated in an earlier report.

These conclusions come as the City Council is considering a law that would transition away from the most dangerous fuels. A [hearing](#) on the bill will be held tomorrow morning.

Official reports estimate that about 9000 big buildings in Manhattan, Brooklyn, Queens, and the Bronx have boilers that burn what's known as "residual oil" to heat their units. These leftovers from the petroleum distillation process release soot and toxic chemicals into the air when burned.

Small particles in soot pollution can travel deep into lungs and slip directly into the bloodstream. Over time, inhaling the fumes can lead to cardiovascular disease, asthma, and early death.

Policy Integrity executive director, Michael Livermore said, "Switching to less toxic fuel is relatively inexpensive compared to the serious health consequences of burning dirty oil. New York City should transition as quickly as possible to cleaner fuels."

The soot concentrations caused by residual oil generate increased health risks similar to those expected for a non-smoker who lives with a smoker. To that extent, the health of the millions of people who live and work here are at risk.

Kevin Cromar, Policy Integrity's public health fellow said, "Currently, many buildings choose the cheapest, dirtiest fuel. Even making relatively modest upgrades could save 84 lives per year."

To reach the results in this report, the authors used three separate methodologies to get three estimates of the number of lives saved from converting to cleaner heating oil: a comparison of

heating season and non-heating season nickel concentrations, a compilation of three independent emissions studies, and an analysis of newly available data from the City.

The three estimates—using different monitoring data and methodologies—all generate roughly the same numbers for annual avoided deaths. That consistency suggests that the reported range of lives saved is likely to be accurate.

The Institute for Policy Integrity at New York University School of Law is a non-partisan think-tank that works with advocacy organizations and governments to use economics and law to protect the environment, public health, and consumers. At the national and local levels in the United States and across the globe, Policy Integrity projects bring economics to bear on issues like climate change and net neutrality.

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[Click here](#) to read the policy brief.