

# Environmental Health Coalition

COALICION de SALUD AMBIENTAL

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## Media Release

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## Community demands rerouting of diesel trucks *Toxic emissions from maquiladora traffic put kids' health at risk*

(Tijuana, BC) As Mexico celebrated Mothers Day today, Environmental Health Coalition, members of the Colectivo Chilpancingo Pro Justicia Ambiental and Youth for Environmental Justice, residents of the Colonia Chilpancingo area in Tijuana and supporters gathered in front of the local Kindergarten to call for protecting children's health by rerouting diesel trucks from nearby maquiladoras that regularly drive past schools and homes in the neighborhood.

"Our children have the right to a healthy environment when they're at school," said Ana Langarica, a member of the Colectivo Chilpancingo and mother of a son enrolled in the Kindergarten.

Colonia Chilpancingo is adjacent to the largest of Tijuana's 63 industrial parks and is less than one mile from the U.S./Mexico border Port of Entry at Otay Mesa. More than 1.4 million trucks cross the border there each year, representing two-thirds of all commercial truck traffic across the entire California-Mexico border.

Trucks making deliveries to and from the transnational maquiladora factories routinely take shortcuts through the neighborhood. The 2,000 school-age children, their families, school staff, and those who live and work in the area are forced to breathe high levels of diesel emissions from these trucks. Diesel exhaust is linked to serious health hazards including asthma, cancer and heart disease.

"The maquiladoras have invaded this community and made it an extension of the industrial park," said Aníbal Méndez, Youth Group Coordinator with EHC and the Colectivo Chilpancingo.

In 2008 and 2009, EHC staff and 27 residents conducted air sampling at the Ana María Berlinga Kindergarten, the Nicolás Bravo/Emiliano Zapata elementary school, and the State Secondary School No. 89 in the Chilpancingo neighborhood. Analysis of the data showed alarmingly high levels of ultrafine particulate levels at all three school sites. The highest level measured was

370,666 particles per cubic centimeter at the Kindergarten. By comparison, the average level at the control site on a nearby street was 14,750 particles per cubic centimeter.

Fifty percent of the trucks counted by the sampling teams bore double license plates, indicating they are licensed to operate on both sides of the border and are likely servicing the maquiladora industry. Shortcuts through the neighborhood save drivers time and fuel, but there are existing main arteries surrounding the area to the north, south, east and west, which are appropriate routes for the maquiladora trucks to take.

More than 500 supporters have signed EHC's petition to stop the invasion of trucks. Supporters include teachers, parents and students, medical personnel in the colonia clinic, students at the Universidad Iberoamericana and the Universidad Autónoma de Baja California, staff at the Colegio de la Frontera Norte, and members of the environmental, faith and human rights community from around Mexico, the U.S., Chile, Argentina and Brazil.

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