June 7, 2012

Dear Orange County Register Editor,

In his June 4 Reader Rebuttal, James Enstrom makes several statements about the health effects of air pollution that are simply untrue. According to Enstrom, air pollution does not cause any premature deaths in Southern California and our air—among the dirtiest in the nation—doesn’t cause any significant health problems whatsoever.

An overwhelming body of peer-reviewed scientific research, some of it conducted right here in the Southland, proves his statements false. In one landmark study of more than 1,700 children in 12 Southland communities, air pollution stunted the growth of children’s lungs, potentially foreshadowing compromised lung function as adults. (Full article at http://www.nejm.org/doi/full/10.1056/NEJMoa040610)

Studies specific to residents of Southern California have found significant associations of premature deaths and levels of particulate air pollution. (Abstract at http://journals.lww.com/epidem/Fulltext/2004/07000/A_Cohort_Study_of_Air_Pollution_and_Mortality_in.107.aspx)

The U.S. Environmental Protection Agency’s Clean Air Scientific Advisory Committee, composed of scientists with impeccable credentials and chaired by Dr. Jonathan M. Samet, a department chair at USC, has found that today’s health standard for particulate matter is not stringent enough to protect public health. (Report at http://yosemite.epa.gov/sab/sabproduct.nsf/264cb1227d55e02c85257402007446a4/CCF9F4C0500C500F8525779D0073C593/$File/EPA-CASAC-10-015-unsigned.pdf)

Relying on the best available science, AQMD works with community and business leaders to achieve health-based clean air standards required by federal law while also supporting economic growth.

To get a sense of the human impact of air pollution, I strongly urge your readers to view AQMD’s signature film at www.TheRightToBreathe.org.

Sincerely,

Barry R. Wallerstein, D.Env.
AQMD Executive Officer
Health and Air Quality Studies
June 2012

Many studies have reported on the relation between particulate air pollution and public health, including mortality. Listed below are several recent publications.

1. Michael J. Lipsett, M.D., Bart Ostro, Ph.D.; et al., “Extended Analysis of Air Pollution and Cardiovascular Disease in the California Teachers Study Cohort” (October 2011) California Air Resources Board http://www.arb.ca.gov/research/apr/past/06-336.pdf


In addition, a Press Release for future publication:


(Note: The summary of the evaluation will appear in The Lancet Oncology as an online publication ahead of print on June 15, 2012)