

PRESS INFORMATION – no embargo

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Air Quality Specialist calls for Black Carbon Standard

Traditionally, ambient particulates have been measured gravimetrically according to their size. However, Jim Mills, Managing Director of Air Monitors, believes that the time has come to change or at least augment the way ambient particulates are monitored and regulated.

Black Carbon (BC) is a term describing the fine particles that are produced as the result of incomplete combustion of fuels and Jim contests that new BC measurement standards would radically improve human health AND make a very significant contribution to the fight against climate change. BC can be measured accurately and specifically with an Aethalometer, which provides a real-time readout of the concentration of 'Black' or 'Elemental' carbon aerosol particles in the air.

Health Issues

Despite dramatic reductions in airborne particulates in recent decades, a significant level of human health problems persist, and many scientists now believe that finer particles may be the major cause because they are able to travel deeper into the respiratory system.

Climate Change

BC stays in the atmosphere for a relatively short period of time – from days to weeks. This is important because BC emissions are the second largest contribution to current global warming, after carbon dioxide emissions. However, since carbon dioxide stays in the atmosphere for many decades, emissions reductions will take a long time to have an effect, which means that efforts to reduce BC could have a much faster impact on global warming.

Research

The importance of BC has been recognised by the European Commission which is funding a new research project (CARBOTRAF) which aims to create a method, system and tools for adaptively influencing traffic flow in real-time to reduce CO₂ and BC emissions caused by road transport in urban and inter-urban areas.

The two host cities Glasgow and Graz, were chosen due to their ability to manage traffic flows and utilise real-time air quality monitoring systems from Air Monitors and a decision support system provided by IBM Inc.

Summary

Historically, initiatives to lower airborne particulates have been driven by a regulatory need to reduce the levels of PM10 particulates, so new additional monitoring standards based on BC could drive improvements that would both enhance human health and help in the fight against climate change.

Ends

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Note to Editors:

Based in the UK, Air Monitors is an independent, privately owned company representing some of the world's leading environmental monitoring technology manufacturers. Providing monitoring solutions which encompass the very best products, technology and services, Air Monitors offers technical support, maintenance, calibration, operation, analysis and reporting services in addition to the sale or hire of monitoring equipment. Typical applications include the monitoring of particulate matter and gaseous pollutants in both workplace and ambient air.

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