



# NEWS

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## **Bay Area air cleaner due to state's low sulfur fuel law for ships** *Air monitors register 3 percent reduction in fine particulates regionally*

**SAN FRANCISCO-** The Bay Area Air District recently co-authored a scientific study, published in the journal *Environmental Science & Technology*, that concluded that air quality in the San Francisco Bay Area has improved markedly as a result of a 2008 state law requiring ocean-going ships to switch to low sulfur fuel.

The regulation requires ships to switch to cleaner fuel 24 miles before they enter local waters in order to improve air quality and public health throughout the estate.

"Researchers at the Air District, UC Berkeley and UC Davis, have collaborated to produce a study with important implications for the Bay Area and the state," said Jack Broadbent, executive officer of the Bay Area Air District. "It underscores the cumulative improvement in air quality which has resulted from state and local efforts to reduce diesel air pollution from ships, trucks, and rail at our ports"

The Port of Oakland is the fourth busiest seaport in the United States.

To assess the impact of this regulation on the Bay Area, data from the Air District's regional monitoring system was analyzed over a period of several years, using the trace metal vanadium as a marker for heavy fuel combustion by ships. The analysis found that PM 2.5 levels in the Bay Area dropped by 3 percent overall during this period because of the required switch to cleaner ship fuels.

As a result of this and other air quality regulations at the national, state and local level levels since 1990, PM2.5 levels have been reduced by more than 40 percent, resulting in an increase in average life expectancy of six months.

Shipping is a large source of air pollution for urban seaports. Heavy fuel oil used in international shipping, also known as "bunker" fuel contains very high levels of sulfur, upwards of 1600 percent more sulfur than common diesel fuel. Burning heavy fuel causes emissions of sulfur dioxide, a contributor to acid rain formation. Burning heavy fuel also produces a form of fine particulate matter, or PM 2.5, which is considered a toxic air contaminant by the State of California.

An abstract of the article is available at: <http://pubs.acs.org/doi/abs/10.1021/es401049x>.

The Bay Area Air Quality Management District is the regional agency responsible for protecting air quality in the nine-county Bay Area. For more information, visit [www.baaqmd.gov](http://www.baaqmd.gov).

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