Car Exhaust: The World’s Second Fastest Growing Cause Of Death

The Lancet has reported that air pollution is the second fastest-growing causes of death in the world. The Lancet is a weekly peer-reviewed general medical journal. It is one of the world’s best known, oldest, and most respected general medical journals.

The recently published study showed that in 2010 3.2 million died prematurely due to air pollution - compared to 800,000 air pollution deaths reported in 2000. Air pollution is everywhere and there are a variety of culprits. However, the study found that it was specifically the type of air pollution caused by car and truck exhaust that are doing the most damage.

Of the 3.2 million deaths attributed to air pollution, 2.1 million came from Asia where car markets have exploded in the past ten years due in part to a positive economic climate. The two hardest hit nations have been China and India.

Automobiles in China and India are not subject to air quality restrictions as in Europe and the America. Additionally, cities like Beijing and Dehli are congested with inadequate highways leading to millions of automobiles sitting idle in traffic emitting harmful exhaust into the city air.

A study put out this week by Tel Aviv University reports that Indian megacities are seeing a faster increase in pollution than the in China. According to the report, from 2002 to 2010 Bangalore saw the second highest increase in air-pollution levels in the world at 34%. Other Indian cities including also saw double-digit increases as well.

Of course promoting electric vehicles (EV) would be the first step in healing this global problem. Unfortunately EVs require access to electricity and a decent electrical grid to support the cars, something that is not always readily available in developing nations. Additionally, the large car in China and India is seen as a status symbol and a point of pride. Thus, there would have to be a cultural mindset shift away from the large gas guzzler and towards other means of transportation as points of pride and wealth.

In case you were wondering, the fastest growing leading cause of death worldwide is obesity. Interestingly, as more cars flood the global market people tend to walk less. Case in point, the average American takes, on average, 5,117 steps a day. The health community urges people to take at least 10,000 steps a day to maintain good health, which is equal to about five miles of walking.