

Telephone 08459 33 55 77

Website www.defra.gov.uk

Simon Birkett
Campaign for Clean Air London

Our ref RF2873
Date 18 September 2009

Dear Simon

Provision of requested information

Thank you for your requests for information about premature deaths in London and the Air Quality Strategy (AQS). This was received on 20 August 2009. Your requests has been considered under the Environmental Information Regulations 2004.

You asked for information about

1. *the 1,031 premature death number, including underlying data, which was referred to in the Introduction of the Mayor's Air Quality Strategy Progress Report to March 2005. This may have come from an analysis of premature deaths undertaken for Defra's Air Quality Strategy 2007; and*
2. *Other information prepared for Defra's Air Quality Strategy 2007 (AQS) which refers in any way to premature (or accelerated, brought forward or similar) deaths in London;*

The value of 1031 comes from an unpublished spreadsheet prepared in support of the 2007 AQS. It is derived from 2005 baseline projections of Particulate Matter (PM₁₀) concentrations calculated from a base year of 2003. Population weighted mean concentrations for these calculations are listed on page 31 of Volume 2 of the 2007 AQS (Please note the concentrations listed are in gravimetric units, divide by 1.3 to get concentrations in TEOM units for use in calculation of short term health effects). The calculations were carried out as described on page 51 of Volume 3 of the 2007 AQS. This section also lists the coefficients and baseline rates used. The spreadsheet attached (titled healthcalcsdd 20032004 refers. The relevant squares for premature deaths have been highlighted with a bold black box.

Deaths brought forward associated with PM₁₀ were also calculated for a base year of 2004 within the work carried out to support the 2007 AQS. The same methods, coefficients and baseline rates were used. The result of the calculation for London was 1012 deaths brought forward. The above spreadsheet includes these figures. A copy of the AQS is

available at <http://defra/environment/airquality/strategy/index.htm> . You should note that the analysis presented in the 2007 Air Quality Strategy was largely focussed on the marginal changes resulting from measures rather than the total impacts.

3 *information prepared subsequently to the AQS work for Defra which refers in any way to premature (or accelerated, brought forward or similar) deaths in London;*

Similar calculations to the above were subsequently made for a base year of 2005 and resulted in 961 deaths brought forward. The same methods, coefficients and baseline rates were used. The relevant spreadsheet for this year (healthcalcsdd2005) is also attached.

The deaths brought forward due to the short term effects of PM₁₀ are considered to be a subset of the much larger changes in life expectancy due to the long term effects of PM₁₀ and were therefore not included in the cost benefit analyses in the AQS in order to avoid double counting. These spreadsheets are the working documents used and a "finished" version was not produced. As such I appreciate that the spreadsheets might be difficult to follow for those unfamiliar with them. If necessary I would be happy to arrange a meeting to explain their contents.

Finally you asked for details on

4 *the 'estimate of 1,600 accelerated deaths per year as a result of air pollution' which was referred to in paragraph 2.19 on page 25 in section 2 of The Mayor's Air Quality Strategy (MAQS).*

The references and notes for this paragraph state 'These are underlying data produced as part of a health impact assessment carried out for the London NHS Executive to estimate the effects of transport on health in London'. These calculations were not carried out for or on behalf of Defra and Defra do not hold any information about them. Therefore I am very sorry but we are not able to provide this information.

You did ask that this information be provided in both electronic and paper format. Regulation 6 of the EIR concerning the form and format of information to be provided states that:

(1) *"Where an applicant requests that the information be made available in a particular form or format, a public authority shall make it so available, unless -*

(a) it is reasonable for it to make the information available in another form or format;
or

(b) the information is already publicly available and easily accessible to the applicant in another form or format.

(2) *If the information is not made available in the form or format requested, the public authority shall -*

(a) explain the reason for its decision as soon as possible and no later than 20 working days after the date of receipt of the request for the information;

(b) provide the explanation in writing if the applicant so requests; and

(c) inform the applicant of the provisions of regulation 11 and of the enforcement and appeal provisions of the Act applied by regulation 18."

As you will see from the spreadsheets provided the data is detailed and runs over several large sheets. We consider that this would be difficult to print out in a way that was meaningful or legible. Therefore we consider that it is reasonable to provide it in the format of a spreadsheet alone rather than in printed form as well. As indicated above we would be happy to arrange an opportunity to discuss the data with you if that would be helpful.

If you are not satisfied with this response you have the right to appeal and further information on this is set out below in Annex A.

Yours sincerely

Robert Vaughan
Air Quality and Industrial Pollution Programme
Area 3C, Ergon House, Horseferry Road, SW1

Annexe A

Complaints

If you are unhappy with the service you have received in relation to your request you may make a complaint or appeal against our decision within 40 working days of the date of this letter. Please write to Clive Porro, Head of Defra's Access to Information Unit at, Area1E 3-8 Whitehall Place London SW1A 2HH, who will arrange for an internal review of your case. Details of Defra's complaints procedure can be found at: www.defra.gov.uk/corporate/opengov/complain/index.htm.

If you are not content with the outcome of the internal review, you have the right to apply directly to the Information Commissioner for a decision. Please note that generally the Information Commissioner cannot make a decision unless you have first exhausted Defra's own complaints procedure. The Information Commissioner can be contacted at:

Information Commissioner's Office
Wycliffe House
Water Lane
Wilmslow
Cheshire
SK9 5AF