Exposure to diesel-emitted particles has been linked to increased cancer risk and cardiopulmonary diseases. The aim of this study was to assess the occupational exposure of port workers to various emissions of diesel engines from container trucks using several measurement devices.

The port of Montreal moves more than one million TEU (twenty-foot equivalent unit) containers each year. Around 2500 container trucks go through the port gates every day and each one has to stop at one of the checkpoints to enter and leave the terminals.

Personal measurements
- Average daily cumulative concentration of respirable EC was 2 µg·m⁻³ (maximum: 4 µg·m⁻³). The correlation to respirable PM and PNC was moderate to low (Figure 5).
- The elementary chemical composition and morphological analyses using microscopy showed the presence of spherical aggregate carbon particles associated with various metals such as iron and aluminum (Figure 6).
- Maximum concentration of urinary 1-OHP was 0.12 µmol/mol creatinine and no significant 1-OHP concentration increase was observed during the week.

Stationary measurements
- Average hourly (±standard deviation) PNC was 38,500 (±20,000) p·cm⁻³ (Figure 7). Daily average PNC ranged between 16,500 and 67,300 p·cm⁻³.
- Peaks up to 500,000 particles·cm⁻³ were associated with the crossing of container trucks with cooling systems and “old” trucks with engine exhausts at the level of the worker (Figures 4, 8).
- The main particle size fraction was 20-40 nm, with 99% < 100 nm.

Wind speed and the number of trucks explained 43% of the total variance of the particle number concentration (Figure 9).

Conclusions
- This study is a contribution to the understanding of the occupational exposures to diesel engines exhaust as few data are available for non-mining industries.
- Port workers employed at the checkpoints in Montreal are exposed to diesel exhaust below the elemental carbon recommendation level for workplaces of 100 µg·m⁻³. However, precaution should be taken as lifetime occupational exposure to diesel exhaust below this limit has been suggested to excess lung cancer deaths through 80 years of age (Vermeulen et al. 2014).
- Further analyses on exposure determinants (with e.g. detailed data on background levels, meteorological data, port activities) and with other exposure groups of workers are needed to characterize occupational exposure to diesel and vessel engine exhausts.

We acknowledge the funding support by the port of Montreal and the Canadian not-for-profit research organization Mitacs.

Contact: Martina.Ragettli@umontreal.ca