

Committee on the Medical Effects of Air Pollutants (COMEAP)

1. COMEAP continues its work on the following major reports:

- **Quantification of the Effects of Air Pollution on Health**

A COMEAP sub-group has been updating the 1998 quantification report and the 2001 report on long-term effects of particles since June 2005. Work has focussed on the effects on mortality of long-term exposure to air pollution. An interim statement on the quantification of the effects of air pollution on health in the UK has been available on its website since January 2006

(www.advisorybodies.doh.gov.uk/comeap/pdfs/interimlongtermeffects2006.pdf). The draft report of the Committee's work on mortality will be available for comment in November 2006. In August 2006, this sub-group will begin work on quantifying the effects on morbidity of long-term exposure to air pollution.

- **Ozone in the UK – Health Implications**

The report on ozone will be published in two sections – the first section will review the latest information on health effects and will be placed on the COMEAP website, for comment, later this year. The second section will consider the shape of the exposure response relationship. A printed hard copy will be produced when both sections are completed.

- **Does air pollution cause asthma?**

The asthma report is presently on hold. COMEAP will consider a schedule for resuming its work on this report, now that the Cardiovascular disease report has been published.

2. **Buncefield fire (11th December 2005)**

The Committee discussed the impact of the Buncefield oil depot fire at its last meeting on 23rd June 2006. A presentation was given by Professor Virginia Murray from the Health Protection Agency. The Committee was provided with a detailed report from netcen on the air pollution levels at the time of the fire

(www.defra.gov.uk/environment/airquality/buncefield/index.htm).

The plume had remained above the boundary layer and monitored air pollution levels in general did not rise above normal levels. The Committee therefore thought it unlikely that there would have been any significant increase in health effects due to air pollution from the fire. A statement on the Committee's views is in preparation.

World Health Organisation (WHO) – Air Quality Guidelines (global update 2005)

Since its last update in 1997, the WHO has evaluated the evidence from new studies on the effects of air pollution on human health. This 2005 update focuses on common pollutants such as particulate matter (PM), ozone (O₃), nitrogen dioxide (NO₂) and sulphur dioxide (SO₂) and is available on WHO's website at: www.euro.who.int/Document/E87950.pdf

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