

# Vehicle pollution major killer

Emissions from vehicles are causing more deaths in the 30-plus age group than road accidents.

Vehicle emissions are killing around 400 New Zealanders aged 30 and over every year, a report shows.

Releasing the report yesterday, Transport Minister Mark Gosche said it estimated that 399 people aged 30 and over died prematurely each year from exposure to microscopic particles from vehicle emissions.

It also estimated that 970 people in the same age group died prematurely each year from air pollution derived from all sources, including fires used

for home heating.

Mr Gosche said that, in comparison, 454 people died last year from road accidents, of which 243 were aged 30 and over.

"This report shows that air pollution from vehicle emissions in New Zealand is a significant but under-recognised cause of health effects ranging from illness to premature death," he said.

"It demonstrates that we have an invisible road toll as well as a visible

one, and highlights the need to continue working to reduce the amount of emissions created by motor vehicles."

The report was commissioned by the Ministry of Transport after a recent World Health Organisation study in Europe indicated that the number of premature deaths for those aged over 30, due to vehicle-related air pollution, was greater than the road toll.

The New Zealand report was pro-

duced by the National Institute of Water and Atmospheric Research, working with air quality and public health researchers.

"As with all statistical studies, there is a measured level of uncertainty regarding these figures," Mr Gosche said.

"However, this report is the first comprehensive one of its type done in New Zealand and provides a useful benchmark for future research."

— NZPA



Mark Gosche