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1. Volkswagen emissions scandal: diesel "worse than the black plague" and responsible for 50,000 premature deaths a year in the UK alone;Some 50,000 people in the UK suffer premature deaths because of nitrogen oxide emitted by diesel vehicles

Volkswagen emissions scandal: diesel "worse than the black plague" and responsible for 50,000 premature deaths a year in the UK alone; Some 50,000 people in the UK suffer premature deaths because of nitrogen oxide emitted by diesel vehicles

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The  **INDEPENDENT**

Section: FRONTPAGE

Length: 315 words

Byline: Hazel Sheffield

Body

The rigging of diesel emissions by Volkswagen and other car manufacturers is a public health catastrophe "worse than the black plague" that is responsible for tens of thousands of premature deaths in the UK alone.

Simon Birkett from the Clean Air in London campaign has called for a royal commission to investigate carmakers' activities in the UK.

"Everybody has been affected by diesel emissions - we know it has killed people. Even the black plague only affected a finite number of people. There's nothing on this scale in history to my knowledge," Birkett told the Independent.

Up to 50,000 people die prematurely in the UK alone from nitrogen dioxide pollution caused by diesel cars, according to Roger Barrowcliffe, chair of the Institution of Air Quality Management.

A report by Transport and Environment put the number of premature deaths from air pollution as a whole much higher. It said 500,000 people in the UK suffer premature deaths; a quarter of a million hospital admissions; and 100 million working days are lost, cumulatively costing over (EURO)900 billion.

In London, one-fifth of all deaths are said to be the result of long-term exposure to air pollution in London in one year. Each of these deaths was likely to have been about 12 years early.

Read more: The damage runs deep as car giant pollutes its reputation These are the Volkswagen cars affected The other scandal to hit Volkswagen this year Volkswagen sets aside (EURO)6.5 billion to win back trust

Environmentalists have long known about the gap between lab testing of car emissions and what we observe in real world emissions. Academic studies have shown that diesel vehicles on the road emit far more than they are supposed to.

Barrowcliffe said the Volkswagen scandal may be the catalyst for change. "The information has been out there for quite some time but governments and consumers have ignored it," Barrowcliffe said.

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