

## ***School Principals - Turn Your Schoolyard into a Clean Air Zone!***

When cars and buses idle, they release unhealthy exhaust fumes that have been linked to asthma and lung cancer. Children are more susceptible to exhaust pollution because their lungs are still developing and they breathe at a faster rate than adults. Diesel exhaust from idling school buses is particularly harmful and can accumulate on and around buses, posing a health risk to drivers and children. When buses and cars idle in schoolyards, the exhaust can also pollute the air inside school buildings, posing a health risk to children throughout the day.



Eliminating unnecessary idling is a simple, cost-effective way to help reduce exposure to air pollution in your school communities. School principals can adopt “no-idling” policies for their schoolyards and promote this message to parents, students, teachers, and school bus drivers (see “No-Idling Tips” below). Enlist others to help promote the no-idling campaign through newsletters and take-home information cards. Student volunteers (through classroom projects or science/environmental clubs with teacher supervision) can hand out information and “Clean Air” stickers to bus drivers and parents who

wait at schoolyards in idling vehicles. Several schools in New Hampshire – Hampton Academy Junior High and Keene High School – have already successfully initiated idling reduction campaigns.

The New Hampshire Department of Environmental Services (DES) has many ideas and tools to help you get started! DES provides free materials such as “no-idling” signs, sample newsletter articles, stickers, and key chains to school districts. DES staff is also available to speak with principals, teachers, and school boards about the health issues of vehicle exhaust and how to turn your school into a Clean Air Zone.

To learn more or request materials, contact Kathy Brockett at 271-6284 or [kbrockett@des.state.nh.us](mailto:kbrockett@des.state.nh.us).

### ***No-Idling Tips for Schools and Drivers***

- Encourage all drivers – bus drivers and parents – to turn off engines as soon as they arrive in the schoolyard. PLEASE – do not allow engines to idle while discharging or waiting for passengers.
- Post signs in schoolyard loading and unloading areas to remind drivers to turn engines off (see sign example at right).
- In colder months, provide a space inside where bus drivers or parents who arrive early can wait. During athletic events, encourage bus drivers to use indoor space instead of remaining on the bus.
- Cold weather is always a concern in New Hampshire. Drivers should use common sense and good judgment when taking steps to reduce idling during the winter months. When idling is necessary, drivers should limit idling time, based on outside temperature, according to state regulations (Env-A 1100) as follows:



Above 32 degrees F - 5 minutes  
Between minus 10 and 32 degrees F - 15 minutes  
Below minus 10 degrees F - No limit

### ***Myths and Facts about Idling***

Myth: Engines need a long time to warm up before driving.

Fact: Idling does *not* effectively warm up your vehicle, even in cold weather. You can start to drive as soon as your windows are clear of ice and snow. It only takes 10-30 seconds to warm up the engine.

Myth: Idling is good for the engine.

Fact: Excessive idling actually puts extra wear and tear on your engine, and can damage many of its components. Using a remote starter encourages unnecessary idling and wastes fuel.

Myth: Shutting off your vehicle and restarting it is bad for the engine and wastes more gas than if you leave it running.

Fact: If waiting in your car for more than 10 seconds, you can turn the engine off (except for when you're freezing or waiting in traffic).