

Engine Idling and Air Pollution

Most of us have occasionally left our car engines running while waiting to pick up our children, or while in the drive-through line at a bank or fast-food restaurant. We've also been told to let a car's engine idle for several minutes to warm it up first thing in the morning. But when you leave your car or truck running while it's parked or sitting still, the engine produces air pollution. This pollution can harm your health, and also contributes to problems like smog and climate change.

Is idling really that bad?

Have you ever had to breathe the smelly exhaust fumes from the car in front of you while waiting at a red light? That exhaust isn't just an annoyance; it can be dangerous. Exhaust from motor vehicles contains carbon monoxide, carbon dioxide, fine particles, and other toxic air pollutants. Recent studies have shown a direct link between many respiratory diseases and the pollutants found in vehicle exhaust. Children are especially at risk, because they breathe faster (50 percent more air per pound of body weight) than adults. Vehicle exhaust worsens many children's asthma symptoms. More than one out of every 10 children in Washington has been diagnosed with asthma, and the number is rising. This is significant because a great deal of idling takes place at schools, where buses and cars line up to drop off and pick up children; and the children end up breathing the exhaust.

What can be done?

All you have to do is turn your car off if you're going to be waiting for more than 30 seconds. Just remember, when the car isn't moving, the engine shouldn't be running. When the engine isn't running, it's not polluting.

Isn't it better to keep a car running than to keep turning it off and restarting it?

Actually, it isn't. Restarting a car's engine frequently has little effect on it. However, excessive idling can actually damage parts of a car's engine, including cylinders, spark plugs, and the exhaust system. Plus, contrary to popular belief, idling is not an effective way to warm up most car engines. Today's

WHY IT MATTERS

Studies show a direct link between many respiratory diseases and the pollutants found in vehicle exhaust. Children are especially at risk because they breathe faster (50 percent more air per pound of body weight) than adults. Vehicle exhaust increases many children's asthma symptoms. More than one out of every 10 children in Washington has been diagnosed with asthma, and the number is rising.

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automobile manufacturers recommend waiting no more than 30 seconds before you begin driving, even on the coldest days.

Other benefits of cutting down on idling include:

- You'll save money. Idling a vehicle for 10 minutes a day uses an average of about 22 gallons of gas per year. If gas costs \$2.00 a gallon, you'll save \$44 per year, just by turning your key. Remember: idling equals zero miles per gallon!
- You'll protect your health, and that of others. By turning your vehicle's engine off when it isn't moving, you and others around you, including children and people with respiratory problems, won't have to breathe unhealthy exhaust fumes from a vehicle that is going nowhere.
- You'll help protect our climate and air. You'll reduce harmful greenhouse gas emissions that contribute to problems such as smog and climate change.
- You'll reduce wear and tear on your vehicle's engine.

Where can I get more information?

For more information, visit www.airwatchnw.org/anti-idling-programs/ or contact:

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