

Reducing Motor Vehicle "Idling"



Idling our car may seem like a fairly innocuous activity, but in fact it is actually quite detrimental to our health, and to our environment. Together, all the vehicles on the road are the biggest single source of smog and ground-level ozone in the US, and the second biggest source of greenhouse gases (after electricity generation.) Exposure to exhaust emissions can exacerbate symptoms of asthma, bronchitis, and other respiratory issues, as well as increase the risk of cancer, heart and lung disease. Children are particularly vulnerable to toxins from exhaust, as their lungs are still developing and they breathe 50% more air per pound of body weight than adults do.

Cars have evolved from the times when we were told that turning them off repeatedly would harm them and waste gas – now, in fact, unnecessary idling is actually detrimental to the modern automotive engine and each day Americans waste approx. 3.8 million gallons of gas by voluntarily idling their cars.

How can we all help?

- **If you are idling more than 10 seconds, everyone benefits by your turning off the car and restarting when needed.** Examples: eliminate idling in school zones and other pick-up situations, while waiting for a ferry or bridge, while running in for a “quick stop,” and when you pull over to talk on a cell phone.
- The best way to **warm up a car initially** is to drive it moderately for several miles within 10 seconds of starting the engine, up to 30 seconds in colder weather.
- **Spread the word** by telling others about this simple way to help ourselves and the environment.
- **More Info:** MA Dept. of Environmental Protection: www.mass.gov/dep