

## **“IDLE-FREE NYC” FACT SHEET**

### **What is curbside idling?**

Idling occurs when a driver leaves his or her engine running while the vehicle is parked (legally or illegally). Everyday thousands of New York drivers needlessly *idle* their trucks and cars for minutes, or even hours. Idling wastes money by burning millions of gallons of fuel each year and risks public health by releasing thousands of tons of pollution into the air.



### **Why is engine idling a health problem?**

Pollution like smog and soot from vehicle tailpipes can irritate and damage human lungs, leading to higher risks of asthma, cancer, and heart disease. A major source of this pollution is idling. To make matters worse, people often park and idle right where we breathe - along our sidewalks, schoolyards, playgrounds, hospitals, shops, businesses, and homes. In fact, studies show that

- Asthma rates in New York's boroughs are twice as high as the rest of the country.
- 1 in 8 New Yorkers is diagnosed with asthma during their lifetimes.
- In 2008, the American Lung Association ranked New York the 8<sup>th</sup> worst city for smog pollution.

people who live near heavily-trafficked roadways face significantly elevated risks of asthma attacks and heart disease, stunted childhood lung development, adverse birth outcomes, lower IQ scores, cancer and other diseases contributing to premature death. Children appear to be especially at risk: exposures during pregnancy and early childhood to roadside air pollution have been linked to higher rates of subsequent respiratory and developmental problems.

### **Why is idling an environmental problem?**

Air pollution from idling engines is a contributor to elevated levels of smog and soot across the region. In New York City, idling engines create close to 24 tons of sooty particles, 940 tons smog-forming nitrogen oxides (NO<sub>x</sub>), 2,200 tons volatile organic compounds (VOC), over 6,400 tons of carbon monoxide (CO), and about 130,000 tons of the green-house gas (GHG) carbon dioxide (CO<sub>2</sub>).



### **How much is idling costing New York City drivers?**

New Yorker City drivers waste over \$28 million dollars every year in fuel burned while idling. Idling also inflicts more wear and tear on engines, leading to higher maintenance costs. New York City has anti-idling laws with fines ranging from \$100 to \$2000 for people who idle their vehicles for more than 1 minute adjacent to schools and 3 minutes for the rest of NYC.

## **FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS**

**Q: Doesn't my car engine need time to warm up during the winter?**

**A:** Today's electronic engines do not need idling to warm up before being operated. In fact, the best way to warm the engine is by easing into your drive and avoiding excessive revving. The vehicle's engine warms twice as quickly if driven instead of idled.

**Q: Doesn't idling help warm up the cabin interior?**

**A:** Sitting in an idling vehicle means you are breathing in more of the dirtier exhaust which leaks into the cabin. Any warmth you may get from a car heater is not worth the damage you do to your health. If parked and waiting inside the vehicle, it is better for your health to get out of the car and go into the store or building.



Saving money is as easy as turning off your engine. (Photo: Bill Selak)

**Q: Doesn't restarting an engine burn more fuel and cause more pollution than just leaving a vehicle idling?**

**A:** Contrary to popular belief, this is not true. In fact, idling for just ten seconds or more wastes more gas or diesel than restarting the engine.

**Q: Aren't frequent restarts hard on the vehicle's engine and battery?**

**A:** Not any more! Advances in technology have produced improved, more durable engines. The added wear on these components from engine restarts amounts to no more than \$10 a year. Compare this to the fuel cost saved by not idling, which can add up to \$30 - \$600 per year depending on fuel prices, idling habits, and vehicle type. Furthermore, idling increases overall engine wear by causing the car to operate for longer than necessary.

**It's that simple: Make it a habit to turn off your engine when you are waiting at the curb even if it's just for a short period of time.**

For more info go to: [www.edf.org/stopidling](http://www.edf.org/stopidling)