

Anti-Idling

CASE STUDY

Newton

EDUCATION ENCOURAGEMENT **ENGAGEMENT** EVALUATION ENGINEERING EQUITY | **URBAN** RURAL SUBURBAN

Background

The goal of the [Massachusetts Anti-Idling Law](#) is to improve air quality by reducing unnecessary pollution from idling vehicles. Massachusetts General Law limits engine idling to **five minutes**, including on school grounds, with exception when idling is necessary. For example, school buses idling to operate required flashing lights is necessary, while idling to sit in a parking lot in mild weather is unnecessary.

Schools across Massachusetts are working with municipal officials to install permanent “NO IDLING” signage to remind staff, families, and bus operators to protect campus air quality. Ongoing education and awareness are essential to help school communities understand why anti-idling matters and how small actions can reduce pollution.

Overview:

Newton Public Schools has made reducing vehicle idling central to its commitment to student health and environmental protection. In 2020, the District partnered with students, families, staff, Newton Police, and Green Newton to educate the community and enforce Massachusetts’ Anti-Idling Laws. Through the “Turn Off Your Engine at School” campaign, drivers are encouraged to shut off engines after 10 seconds, particularly in school zones. Educational materials were shared widely, and all of Newton’s 21 schools now display prominent anti-idling signage in family drop-off and pick-up “Blue Zones,” reinforcing the District’s commitment to a healthier community.

Lessons Learned:

- ✓ By prioritizing walking, biking, carpooling, transit, and anti-idling efforts, Newton has helped reduce overall vehicle use for the school commute by making sustainable travel options convenient, safe, and enjoyable.
- ✓ Educating residents on the harmful effects of idling on our health and environment helped foster community-wide respect for, and compliance with, the Anti-Idling Law.

4 REASONS TO STOP IDLING

IT HELPS PEOPLE

Breathing exhaust fumes is linked to increases in asthma, allergies, heart and lung disease, and cancer. Children are especially vulnerable.

IT HELPS THE PLANET

Personal-vehicle idling wastes about 3 billion gallons of fuel annually in the U.S., generating around 30 million tons of CO₂.

IT'S BETTER FOR YOUR CAR

Idling can damage engine components by causing fuel residue to build up on cylinder walls.

IT'S THE LAW

It's illegal to idle in Massachusetts.



IdleFreeNewton.org



Impacts



All 21 schools across the City of Newton comply with the MA General Law by maintaining permanent “NO IDLING” signage in each of the drop-off/pick-up “Blue Zones.”



Transportation is the second-largest contributor to greenhouse gas emissions in the City of Newton, making initiatives like the anti-idling campaign vital to reducing emissions and strengthening community sustainability. (GreenNewton)