



Department of Environmental Protection

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Best Management Practices: Reducing Diesel Pollution at Schools

1. Adopt a written idling reduction policy.

School bus drivers should shut off bus engines as soon as they reach their destinations and not idle buses while waiting for passengers. This should apply to daily route travel, field trips, and team transportation. Buses should not be restarted until they are ready to depart and there is a clear path to exit the pick-up area.

Drivers should idle buses during early morning warm-up only long enough to complete pre-trip safety inspections. Especially during winter months, the running engine is doing double-duty, helping warm up the defrosters and interior while mandatory safety items are being inspected. Schools should provide indoor waiting spaces for drivers who arrive early and need to keep warm. This reduces the need for bus idling.

To reduce engine warm-up time, avoid starting difficulties, and help defrost windows, drivers should consider using block heaters that plug into electrical outlets or inline auxiliary fuel fired heaters. To run flashing lights during longer duration loading and unloading, maintenance staff should install heavy duty battery systems, extra batteries and/or change circuit configurations to power lights without running engines.

2. Publicize the new policy to students, parents, and the school community.

Explain the program in newsletters and social media, and at school committee and PTA meetings.

3. Post "idling limit" signs.

Alert drivers - both bus drivers and parents who are waiting for dismissal - that engines should be turned off when vehicles are waiting or parked.

4. Redesign school bus parking zones to minimize the potential for diesel exhaust inside the bus and in the school.

Move bus parking areas away from school air intake vents. Park buses at a diagonal to prevent front-to-back passing of emissions and reduce diesel fumes in each bus.

5. Apply idling reduction rules to other diesel vehicles.

Delivery trucks and construction equipment create the same pollution that buses do.

6. Ensure that future transportation contracts include idling reduction requirements.

Also require existing buses to be retrofitted with pollution controls and new buses added to the fleet to be equipped with cleaner burning engines.