

IDLE REDUCTION GUIDE FOR SCHOOLS

CREATING AND IMPLEMENTING POLICY



SCHOOLS PLAY AN IMPORTANT ROLE IN PROTECTING CHILDREN FROM THE HEALTH HAZARDS OF IDLING ENGINES. HERE ARE WAYS THAT YOUR SCHOOL CAN START IMPLEMENTING ITS OWN IDLE REDUCTION PLAN.



Please follow MDE to stay connected and use #IdleFreeMD to share your school's efforts on social media platforms.

Exhaust fumes contain pollutants that cause cancer, birth defects, asthma, low fertility, and other serious illnesses. Children are particularly vulnerable to the pollutants in exhaust, which can be dangerously concentrated as drivers wait to pick up and drop off students at school. That's why schools play an important role in protecting children from the health hazards of idling engines.

Maryland Department of the Environment (MDE) has created *Idle Free MD*, a program intended to reduce idling in Maryland communities. Through a coordinated effort with Maryland State Department of Education (MSDE) the following resources and guidelines have been developed to assist schools in developing and implementing their own idle reduction policies.



Maryland
Department of
the Environment

mde.maryland.gov/idlefreeMD

PLEDGE TO BE IDLE FREE.

For more information, contact mde.idlefreemd@maryland.gov

IDLE REDUCTION GUIDE FOR SCHOOLS

1. TALK ABOUT ENGINE IDLING WITH THE SCHOOL COMMUNITY

GOAL: Let others know that exhaust fumes are dangerous and that children are particularly vulnerable to the pollutants contained in exhaust.

PROPOSED ACTIONS: Start a conversation about idling at your school. Make teachers, students, parents and administration aware of the health risks associated with idling. Promote the benefits of having an idle reduction plan.

- Talk about the elevated risk of ground-level pollutants around a concentrated area of idling vehicles—such as outside the school during pick up.
- Educate the school community about how an idle reduction policy would protect everyone while encouraging others to get involved in the fight for cleaner air.
- Download and present [Clean Air for Maryland's Kids: How to start an idle reduction program at your school](#) to school administration. Invite parents and bus drivers to attend the presentation and use it to launch a discussion about how to craft and enforce the new policy. After the presentation, solicit input about ways to acknowledge those who take the pledge to be idle free and invite support in implementing the policy by creating an idle reduction task force.

Click thumbnails to download full-sized copies.

Educate others about the health risks, environmental impact and cost of idling. Share information from the [Idle Reduction Fact Sheet](#) each day over morning announcements and distribute the flier to students and staff.

Make visitors that come to your school aware of idling's impact on Maryland communities. Print and post [Idling's Impact on Maryland Communities](#) in your lobby, delivery entrance, and other common areas.

Encourage students to start a conversation at home about the impacts of idling. Send [Idle Reduction and You](#) home with students so the entire family can start to recognize opportunities for idle reduction in their lives.



IDLE REDUCTION FACT SHEET IDLE FREE MD

THE EFFECTS OF IDLING ON MARYLAND COMMUNITIES

HEALTH RISKS
According to the Earth Policy Institute, more than three million people die each year from the effects of air pollution. Idling contributes to air pollution, which can lead to a variety of serious health conditions. That's why it's important to be aware of how idling impacts your community and turn your engine off at every opportunity.

- Car exhaust contains air pollutants that can cause cancer, respiratory issues, reproductive effects, birth defects, and other serious illnesses.
- One minute of idling produces more carbon monoxide than three packs of cigarettes.
- Exposure to vehicle exhaust increases the risk of death from heart and lung disease.
- Children breathe 52 percent more air per pound than adults. Because of their developing lungs and higher breathing rates, air pollution is especially dangerous to children.
- Car exhaust increases the symptoms of asthma—the most common chronic illness in children, and the cause of most school absences.

ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACT
Idling doesn't just affect air quality. It puts the entire ecosystem at risk. Polluted conditions impact streams, rivers, lakes, bays, and coastal waters. If everyone in Maryland eliminated unnecessary idling, local ecosystems would be healthier.

- Each gallon of fuel burned emits about 20 pounds of carbon dioxide and produces varying levels of nitrogen into the atmosphere.
- Over the course of a year, one car idling for just five minutes each day can emit as many as 25 pounds of harmful air pollutants and about 200 pounds of carbon dioxide.
- Excess nitrogen can fuel the growth of algae blooms in the bay, which can block sunlight from reaching underwater grasses and create low-oxygen "dead zones" that suffocate marine life.
- About one third of the nitrogen in Chesapeake Bay comes from cars.
- Airborne nitrogen is one of the largest sources of pollution affecting the Chesapeake Bay and its resources. Poor water quality affects submerged sea grasses, blue crab, oysters, and fish species.

WASTE AND COST
No one would knowingly purchase a vehicle that guzzles gas, unless getting expensive. Not that's what happens when we idle. Unnecessary idling in traffic on engines wastes fuel and pollutes the air. Consider the economic impact of idling in traffic. You'll be behind the wheel.

- Idling leaves residue on spark plugs, and increases fuel consumption to up to five percent and can reduce the life of your exhaust system.
- Excessive idling can damage your engine and add as much as \$2,000 per year in maintenance costs.
- Idling consumes up to a gallon of fuel an hour and wastes about six billion gallons of fuel each year.
- The average person wastes about one to five cents of gas every year by idling.
- Idling for more than 10 seconds consumes more fuel than restarting your engine.
- Idling contributes to air toxic environmental and human health issues that can affect local economies.

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IDLING'S IMPACT ON MARYLAND COMMUNITIES

CREATES A SIGNIFICANT HEALTH RISK
EXHAUST CONTAINS POLLUTANTS THAT CAUSE CANCER AND BIRTH DEFECTS
CHILDREN ARE AT A HIGHER RISK FROM THE HAZARDS OF EXHAUST
ONE MINUTE OF IDLING PRODUCES MORE CARBON MONOXIDE THAN 3 PACKS OF CIGARETTES

HARMS THE ENVIRONMENT
AIR POLLUTANTS SUFFOCATE MARINE LIFE IN THE BAY
ABOUT ONE-THIRD OF THE NITROGEN IN THE CHESAPEAKE BAY COMES FROM AIR POLLUTION
IDLING WASTES ABOUT 8 BILLION GALLONS OF FUEL EACH YEAR IN THE U.S.

WASTES MONEY AND FUEL
TWO MINUTES OF IDLING WASTES THE SAME AMOUNT OF GAS AS ONE MILE OF DRIVING
IDLING LEAVES RESIDUE ON SPARK PLUGS THAT CAUSES A 5% INCREASE IN FUEL CONSUMPTION
IDLING WASTES ABOUT 8 BILLION GALLONS OF FUEL EACH YEAR IN THE U.S.

Visit mde.maryland.gov/idlefreeMD to get started
PLEDGE TO BE IDLE FREE



IDLE REDUCTION AND YOU IDLE FREE MD

IDLING WASTES MONEY, IMPACTS HEALTH AND AFFECTS THE ENVIRONMENT. IT'S IMPORTANT TO KNOW HOW TO RECOGNIZE AND REDUCE IDLING SO EVERYONE CAN HELP KEEP MARYLAND COMMUNITIES THRIVING.

WHAT IS IDLING?
Idling is when a vehicle is left running unnecessarily while stopped. It occurs when an engine is on, but the vehicle is not otherwise in use or operation.

HOW LONG IS IT OK TO IDLE?
In Maryland, you're not legally allowed to idle longer than five minutes. However, engines can burn fuel from being turned off after just 10 seconds. And since idling emits pollutants that are harmful to lungs, the less you idle, the better.

IS IDLING SAFE IF NO ONE IS NEAR THE VEHICLE?
Idling puts everyone inside of the vehicle at risk by exposing them to a much higher concentration of pollutants than a car in motion. It also impacts air quality and the environment.

WILL CHANGING MY BEHAVIOR REALLY MAKE THAT MUCH OF A DIFFERENCE?
When it comes to idling, even five minutes matter. Many drivers aren't aware of how much they idle or how even small changes can make a big difference.

HOW CAN I GET STARTED ON AN IDLE REDUCTION PLAN?
Start by simply being aware. Pay attention to your own idling patterns and make lifestyle changes to avoid idling.

WHAT IF I AM LOADING OR UNLOADING CARGO OR PASSENGERS?
There's no benefit to keeping your vehicle running during these activities. Turn your engine off to avoid idling. Turn to ground-level exhaust fumes.

SHOULD I WARM UP MY ENGINE BEFORE I START DRIVING?
Today's electronic engines don't need to warm up—even in the winter. Avoid revving the engine and begin driving right after you start your car.

WHAT IF I WANT TO HEAT UP THE CABIN FASTER?
A vehicle in motion will deliver warm air to the cabin faster than one that's idling.

HOW ELSE CAN I AVOID IDLING?
Avoid drive through windows and go inside instead. Waiting for passengers, stopping for traffic, and pulling over to rest or use a mobile device are other activities that don't have to include idling.

HOW CAN I GET OTHERS TO START THINKING ABOUT IDLE REDUCTION?
Talk to the people in your life about why idling is important. Make recognizing the opportunities for idle reduction a goal. Offer them your role with others. Visit mde.maryland.gov/idlefreeMD for resources to help you start the conversation.

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2. CREATE AN IDLE REDUCTION POLICY

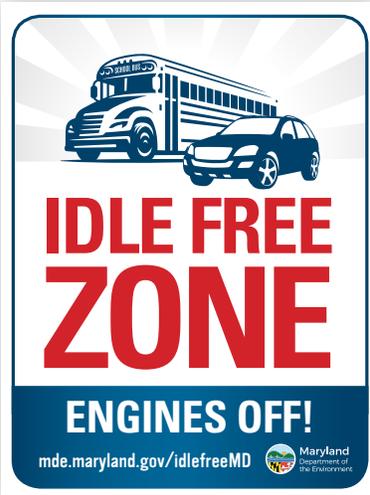
GOAL: Define your school's idle reduction plan and let students, parents, administration, bus drivers and visitors know about the new policy.

PROPOSED ACTIONS: Document the specifics of your school's idle reduction policy and create an implementation plan.

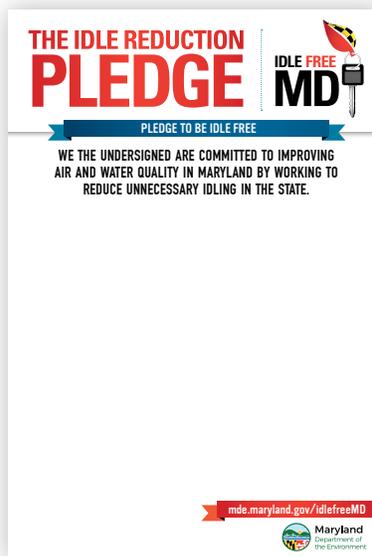
- Recognize the opportunities for idle reduction specific to your school. Download a sample [Idle Reduction Policy](#) to use as a reference for crafting your own policy.
- Include idle reduction instructions into school policy literature. Post the new policy on your school's website and newsletter. Be sure to provide a complete set of school policies to all new and returning families.
- Send emails or letters to parents, administration and bus drivers about the school's idle reduction policies. Download sample notices to [parents](#), [administration](#) and [bus drivers](#) for ways you can ask for help in keeping the air around your school healthier.

Click thumbnails to download full-sized copies.

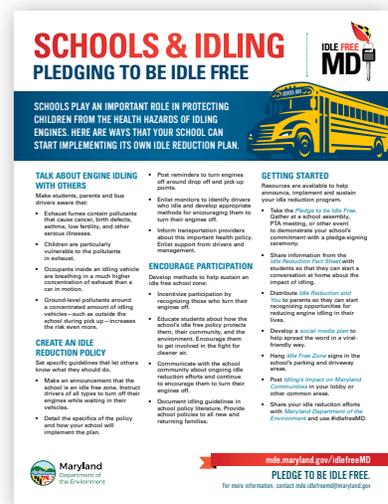
Post reminders to turn engines off around drop off and pick up points. Download, print and hang [Idle Free Zone](#) signs in the school's parking lots, delivery and driveway areas.



Gather at a school assembly, parent meeting, or other event and take the [Pledge to be Idle Free](#) during a pledge-signing ceremony. Invite administration to sign the pledge and post it in a common area.



Distribute [Schools & Idling: Pledging to be Idle Free](#) with your idle reduction task force to inform them of the different ways the school can create and implement an idle reduction policy.



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3. ENCOURAGE PARTICIPATION

GOAL: Develop methods to help sustain your idle free school zone throughout the year.

PROPOSED ACTIONS: Communicate with the school community about ongoing idle reduction efforts and ways they can help spread the word about the school's policy.

- Include idle reduction messaging that encourages participation throughout the year during school events and through school communications.
- Incorporate idle reduction efforts into classroom learning opportunities and solicit student support. Download a [Teacher's Guide to Idle Reduction](#) for ways to get started.
- Incentivize participation and support for idle reduction by recognizing those who turn their engines off. Create and distribute key chains, t-shirts, coffee mugs, or other specialty media with the school's logo and/or the [Idle Free MD logo](#) to those who support the program. Collect gift cards from local establishments to give out to individuals or classes that collect the most pledges.
- Share your idle reduction efforts with [Maryland Department of the Environment](#) and use #idlefreeMD.

Click thumbnails to download full-sized copies.

Send home letters requesting commitments to the school's new idling policy and encourage drivers to take the [Pledge to be Idle Free](#). Ask drivers to sign and return the pledge. Set goals for participation and chart collected pledges in a common area of your school.



Distribute school pledge [decals](#) to the school community. Encourage drivers to put them in their vehicle's rear-view window to demonstrate their commitment to idle reduction with the rest of the school community.



Download [Spreading the Word About Idle Reduction Through Facebook](#) for ways to incorporate idle reduction messaging into your Facebook marketing plan.

