

IDLE REDUCTION FACT SHEET



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. Tailpipe emissions that form ground-level ozone can lead to a variety of serious health conditions. That's why it's important to be aware of how idling impacts those around you 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 50 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. Related pollution impacts 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 introduces 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 260 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 the Chesapeake Bay comes from the air.
- Airborne nitrogen is one of the largest sources of pollution affecting the Chesapeake Bay and its tributaries. Poor water quality affects submerged bay grasses, blue crab, oysters, and fish species.

WASTE AND COST

No one would knowingly purchase a vehicle that guzzled gas while getting zero miles to the gallon. Yet that's what happens when we idle. Wasteful and unnecessary, idling is harder on engines and less fuel-efficient than driving. Consider the economic impact of idling the next time you're behind the wheel.

- Idling leaves residue on spark plugs, increases fuel consumption by 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 two tanks of gas every year by idling.
- Idling for more than 10 seconds consumes more fuel than restarting your engine.
- Idling contributes to serious environmental and human health issues that can affect local economies.



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