

Five myths on Idling vehicles

Submitted by Alexis Baker, Environmental Programs Coordinator

I have heard conflicting information on vehicle idling. Idling vehicles create carbon dioxide, nitrogen oxides, ground level ozone and other pollutants in the air, just like vehicles in motion. In this article, I will attempt to clear up misinformation. Here are the top five myths about idling vehicles.

Myth #1: It is better to idle a car than to restart the engine as it uses more gas and is bad on the engine.

Fact #1: Thirty seconds of idling can use more fuel than turning off the engine and restarting it. Unless you are in traffic, if you are stopped for more than 30 seconds, turn off your engine. Moreover, frequent restarting has little impact on engine components like the battery and the starter motor. Component wear caused by restarting the engine is estimated to add \$10 per year to the cost of driving, money that will likely be recovered several times over in fuel savings from reduced idling.

Myth #2: Diesel engines need at least five minutes to warm up and should not be turned off.

Fact #2: Most engine manufacturers recommend that newer diesel engines run for no more than 3 minutes before driving. Gelling of diesel fuel use to be a problem, but refiners have worked to resolve this issue by creating winter blends that better withstand colder temperatures. Letting an engine idle actually does more damage to the engine than starting and stopping. Idling and engine causes twice the wear on internal parts compared to driving at regular highway speeds, which can increase maintenance costs and shorten the life of the engine.

Myth #3: Engines should not be run cold in the winter.

Fact #3: Idling is not a good way to warm up your vehicle, even in cold weather. The best way to do this is to drive the vehicle. Again, you do not need to idle more than 30 seconds on winter days before driving away.

Myth #4: Heavy Duty diesel equipment and truck idling is necessary and does not burn much fuel.

Fact #4: Fuel is a large expense for the trucking industry. Idling adversely impacts fleet and truck owners by increasing both fuel and maintenance operating expenses. An hour of idling time consumes about one gallon of diesel fuel.

Myth #5: Diesel emissions are not dangerous.

Fact #5: All emissions are dangerous to breathe, whether from a diesel engine or a traditional fuel engine. Both diesel and regular gasoline engines can emit such chemicals as carbon monoxide and contribute to the creation of ground level ozone. It is especially important to protect others by not idling your cars when waiting to pick up children, family, or friends. Encourage businesses, schools, and places known to have idling cars to put up anti-idling signs. These signs may be obtained from the North Carolina Division of Air Quality. For more information, visit their website at www.ncair.org

Alexis can be contacted at 694-6524 or by email at alexisbaker@hendersoncountync.org