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CONTACT: William McAlduff
Superintendent

Anti-Idling Campaign Seeks to Educate Drivers

**WINCHESTER SCHOOLS LAUNCH EFFORT TO REDUCE
STUDENTS' EXPOSURE TO HARMFUL VEHICLE EXHAUST**

Idling bus and other vehicle engines unnecessarily while parked on school property not only increases children's exposure to harmful air pollution, but it is also against the law. That's according to officials in Winchester who have begun a campaign to educate drivers about the importance of turning their engines off while waiting to pick up or drop off children at local schools.

State law limits most engine idling to five minutes or less. The restriction applies to both gasoline- and diesel-powered vehicles. The law provides exemptions for vehicles that are being serviced, making deliveries of refrigerated goods, operating power accessories such as hydraulic or wheelchair lifts, or running emergency or safety lights or equipment that require more than auxiliary power.

However, in August 2009, the Commonwealth of Massachusetts, under the Registry of Motor Vehicles, passed a new regulation that further restricts idling on school grounds specifically.

The purpose of Regulation 540 CMR 27.00, adopted by the Registrar of Motor Vehicles, and pursuant to M.G.L. c. 90, s. 16B, is to restrict unnecessary idling of all motor vehicles on school grounds.

1. No motor vehicle operator shall cause or allow the engine of any motor vehicle operated by him or her on school grounds to idle unnecessarily, except under the conditions described in 540 CMR 27.04 ("Exemptions").
2. A motor vehicle operator shall not idle a motor vehicle within 100 feet from a known and active school air intake system, unless the school has determined that alternative locations block traffic, impair student safety or are not cost effective. Reasonable efforts should be made by schools to identify by signage all such known and active air intake systems.

School grounds is defined as in, on or within 100 feet of the real property comprising a public or private accredited preschool, accredited Head Start facility, elementary, vocational or secondary school whether or not in session, and shall include any athletic field or facility and any playground used for school purposes or functions which are owned by a municipality or school district, regardless of proximity to a school building, as well as any parking lot appurtenant to such school athletic field, facility, or playground.

“Whether you are behind the wheel of a school bus, a delivery truck, an SUV or a car, you should turn off the engine as soon as you pull into a school driveway or parking lot and are waiting to pick up your child” said Winchester Superintendent of Schools William McAlduff. “Excessive engine idling needlessly exposes our children to air pollution that can lead to serious health problems over time.”

Diesel exhaust contains fine particles that can penetrate deeply into the lungs and cause breathing difficulties, respiratory infections, and attacks of asthma and chronic bronchitis. Gasoline exhaust contains toxic carbon monoxide and a range of pollutants that contribute to smog and make breathing difficult for everyone.

Children are particularly at risk because their lungs are still developing and pound for pound, they breathe 50 percent more air than adults do.

Students and bus drivers can be exposed to diesel fumes when getting in and out of school buses and passenger vehicles, and even inside them when the engines are running. Exhaust from idling buses, trucks, SUVs and cars accumulates in and around schoolyards, and even inside school buildings when air intake vents are located near bus stops — so teachers, staff and parents can be exposed, too.

“This is why Winchester schools are serious about letting drivers know how important it is for them turn off their engines, particularly when waiting for student dismissal times,” Superintendent McAlduff said.

In their effort to reduce air pollution from school buses and private passenger vehicles, Winchester school officials in collaboration with the Department of Public Works will Post "no idling" signs wherever school buses and private passenger vehicles linger.

The prohibitions of M.G.L. c.90, s. 16B are enforceable by state or local law enforcement agencies with penalties of \$100 for first offense and \$500 for second and subsequent offenses.

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