



School Bus Idling

Idling is when a vehicle is in park, but the engine is still running. Diesel exhaust produced by idling can accumulate on and around the school buses and pollute the air inside the school building. Bus idling increases the concentration of dangerous fine particulate matter (soot) pollution inside school bus cabins, putting students at risk for health complications.

More than 24 million children in the U.S. ride the bus to and from school, spending an average of an hour and a half on a bus each day. Depending on the bus' design, it could be emitting harmful particles.

How are children affected?

Children breathe 50 percent more air per pound of body weight than adults, thereby increasing their exposure rate to carcinogens and respiratory irritants contained in diesel exhaust. Because their lungs are still developing and their essential defense mechanisms have not yet fully developed, they are more susceptible to the harmful effects of pollution.

What Illinois is doing about idling

The Illinois EPA, in conjunction with the Illinois Clean School Bus Program, is working to provide a healthier environment for Illinois school children. The Illinois Clean School Bus Program provides funding to assist schools and school districts to reduce emissions from diesel-powered school buses. The funds are used to replace

existing buses with cleaner models or retrofit buses with advanced emission control technologies.

In 2006, a law was created to prohibit diesel vehicles of more than 8,000 pounds (heavy-duty buses and trucks) from idling for more than 10 minutes per hour when they are parked. Under the law, parked buses may idle for up to 10 minutes per hour when there are no passengers on board and 15 minutes per hour to maintain passenger comfort while passengers other than the driver are on board.

What can I do to help?

The Illinois EPA recommends that school buses idle for no more than five minutes, and many schools have voluntarily adopted this rule. Parents should encourage their school districts to implement their own no-idling policies. A sample policy could include these regulations:

- Doors of the school bus should be closed before the bus engines are started.
- School buses should be parked or idled away from school play areas, classroom windows, or air-intake systems.
- Bus drivers should wait inside the school during extreme cold and hot weather.