

SUSTAINABLE MARBLEHEAD: Car Exhaust is Exhausting!

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“Hey, where do you get off? It’s cold!” Was one of one of the nicer responses I’ve received when trying to politely inform a driver sitting curbside in their humming vehicle, that there is a legal five minute limit to idling. I know it’s cold, or it’s hot, or you want to finish listening to a pod cast or news report on the radio, but both good citizenship and responsible parenting should inspire compliance with the idling laws which read:

Running a vehicle’s engine for longer than five minutes when the vehicle is stopped - is against both state law (M.G.L. Chapter 90, Section 16A) and a MassDEP regulation (Section 7.11 of 310 CMR 7.00).

Exemptions exist for:

- An active, moving pick-up line
- Delivery trucks whose contents rely on the energy produced by a running engine.

There are very good reason for this law, and especially if you are a parent, you’ll want people to observe it.

Little lungs breath at a much faster rate than mature ones, taking in 50 percent more air per pound of whatever is around, which for children, who dwell closer to tail pipes includes that ozone that the doctor spoke of causing:

- Wheezing

- Coughing
- Asthma Attacks (asthma symptoms in children increase as a result of exposure to car exhaust. Asthma is the most common chronic illness in children and the cause of most school absences)
- Exacerbation to Allergies
- Increase Susceptibility to Respiratory Infection
- Decreased lung function
- Increased the Risk of Heart Attack

By not idling you keep 3 pounds of pollution per month from going into the atmosphere. Also one does their pocketbook and car no favors keeping it running at a stand still:

Can fill the passenger compartment with exhaust that is dangerous to breathe.

Wastes fuel and money. You are getting zero miles to the gallon (the bigger the engine, the higher the cost)

Harms vehicles, causing damage to cylinders, spark plugs, and exhaust systems

Car exhaust is a greenhouse gas contributing to our warming planet.

Finally, it is against the law with a \$100 fine for the first infraction and \$500 for each additional.

There are some well-believed myths about stagnantly running one's car.

Myth 1: Vehicles should be left running for a given amount of time before being driven.

Fact: Engines need no more than a few seconds of idling time before being driven. In addition, driving your vehicle is the best way to warm it up, because driving the vehicle warms up not only the engine, but other parts of the vehicle as well.

Myth 2: Starting a vehicle uses more gas than letting the vehicle idle.

Fact: When idling, vehicles engines operate inefficiently. If an engine is running longer than 10 seconds, it is better and cheaper just to cut the engine off. By eliminating just five minutes a day of voluntary idling, a typical family can save more than \$200 per year in fuel and wear and tear costs.

Myth 3: Frequent turning off and restarting of the engine is hard on a vehicle's engine and battery.

Fact: Increased restarting of a vehicle's engine does only minimal damage to the engine, while only very slightly draining the battery. When idling, engines are forced to run on a fuel rich operating mixture that can eventually lead to decreased engine performance. Idling can also reduce the operating life of engine oil by 75 percent.

Myth 4: Emissions from idling and driving are the same.

Fact: Idling creates worse emissions than driving. This is because idling vehicles emit higher levels of carbon monoxide, carbon dioxide, nitrous oxide, and hydrocarbons. These are some of the pollutants that contribute to Ozone formation.

Myth 5: Diesel engines really do need a lot of warming time, which makes idling necessary.

Fact: Modern diesel engines only require up to three minutes of warming before driving. Some states now even regulate heavy duty vehicle idling, as an effort to improve air quality.

It's almost self evident that idling is hazardous to the very children that parents are sitting in their cars, waiting for. The schools have put up 'No Idling' signs. Let's observe them both at our educational institutions and throughout the town.

We'll breath easier and thank each other.