

## **Motor Vehicle Idling on School Grounds**

### **PURPOSE:**

According to the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA), exposure to diesel exhaust, even at low levels, is a serious health hazard and can cause respiratory problems such as asthma and bronchitis. Diesel emissions are well-documented asthma triggers and may increase the severity of asthma attacks. Asthma is currently the number one cause of missed school days for American children and asthma affects more than 1 in 9 children in New England. In addition to the Rhode Island Department of Environmental Management, the Departments of Health, the Department of Elementary and Secondary Education, the American Lung Association of Rhode Island, First Student, Inc., Laidlaw Education Services of Southern New England, and the Rhode Island Parent Teacher Association endorse this no idling policy.

### **DEFINITION:**

Idling – The operation of an engine when a vehicle is stationary or a piece of non-road equipment that is not performing work.

### **APPLICABILITY:**

This policy applies to the operation of every motor vehicle and school bus operating in the district and owned by the signatory school bus company while on school grounds. The term “school grounds” shall mean in, on, or within 100 feet of the real property of the school whether or not it is in session, and shall include an athletic field or facility and any playground used for school purposes or functions which is owned by the 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.

In collaboration with the District’s school bus transportation provider, the School District agrees to undertake the following steps immediately:

#### **Loading and unloading**

School bus drivers will shut off bus engines immediately upon reaching their destination and buses will not idle while waiting for passengers. The school bus should not be restarted until it is ready to depart.

This rule applies to all bus use, including daily route travel, field trips, and transportation to and from athletic events. School buses will not be restarted until they are ready to depart and there is a clear path to exit the pick-up area.

#### **Limitations on idling**

School bus companies and drivers will limit idling time during early morning warm-up to manufacturers’ recommendations, generally 3-5 minutes in all but the coldest weather. Below are guidelines for idling in cold weather.

If the outside temperature is:

Above 20 ° F: 5-minute maximum

Between -10 and 25° F: 15-minute maximum

Below -10 ° F: as necessary

- Transportation operations’ staff will evaluate and shorten bus routes whenever possible, particularly for older buses with the least effective emissions control. The District will review bus purchasing schedules and routing to further improve emission performance in conjunction with the District’s transportation provider.

- All bus drivers will receive a copy of this No Idling policy or equivalent educational materials at the beginning of every school year, provided by the District Bus Company.
- The construction of new schools will incorporate measures to minimize children's exposure to diesel emissions. All schools should design bus parking zones to limit diesel exhaust inside the bus and in the school, including avoiding proximate school air intake vents and parking buses on the diagonal to prevent front-to-back passing of emissions and to reduce diesel fumes in each bus. The direction of prevailing winds should be considered.
- If a bus requires an engine to be running to operate its flashing lights during longer loading and unloading, maintenance staff should install a heavy-duty battery system and an extra battery and/or change the circuit configurations to power lights by battery without running the engine.
- To reduce engine warm-up time, avoid starting difficulties and help defrost windows, the school bus company will consider using block heaters that plug into electrical outlets or inline auxiliary fuel-fired heaters.
- Bus companies agree to maintain buses according to manufacturers' specifications.

#### Exceptions

No motor vehicle operator shall cause or allow any motor vehicle operated by him or her on school grounds to idle unnecessarily except for any of the following reasons: traffic conditions, to assist wheel chair-bound or special needs students or turbo-charged diesel engine cool down or warm up.

- Buses may remain idling while operating wheel chair equipment, safety equipment or to accommodate heat/air conditioning for medically fragile students.

#### District actions

- The District will make reasonable efforts to identify all known air intake systems by signage, which may be within 100 feet of an idling motor vehicle. A motor vehicle shall not idle within 100 feet of such air intake system unless the School District determines that alternative locations block traffic, impair student safety, or are not cost-effective.
- The School District shall erect and maintain in a conspicuous location on school grounds "NO IDLING" signage.

In the event that Rhode Island's General Assembly enacts a statute mandating school bus no-idling provisions that differ from the provisions agreed to herein, the statutory and implementing regulatory requirements shall govern from their effective date forward.

REFERENCES: R.I. General Law §§ 23-23-29.2 and 31-16.1-1 et seq.; 250-RICR-120 (Air Pollution Control Regulation No. 45); and 42 U.S.C. ch. 85.

Adopted and Effective 1-9-24