Ohio School Asthma Initiative

Model Idling Policy

School District Name:

Policy Number:

Effective Date:

INTRODUCTION

{School District } is committed to providing a safe, healthy and productive environment for all persons occupying our schools. In light of the significant risk posed by school bus exhaust emissions, especially to children, **{School District }** is implementing a bus idling policy. This policy is intended to improve the health and safety of all individuals in or around the school and school grounds and reduce risks associated with exposure to diesel exhaust (such as aggravated respiratory and cardiovascular conditions, decreased lung function, acute respiratory symptoms and chronic bronchitis). Queuing of buses for pickup and drop-off as well as periods of idling during the bus commute itself can cause particular problems. The steps outlined below indicate the exact timing of specific changes to current operations, provide guidance on effective implementation and outline procedures for conflict resolution and enforcement:

APPLICABILITY

This policy applies to the operation of every district-owned and contracted school bus.

RATIONALE

Diesel exhaust from idling school buses can accumulate in and around the bus and pose a health risk to children, drivers and the community at large. Exposure to diesel exhaust can cause lung damage and respiratory problems. Diesel exhaust also exacerbates asthma and existing allergies and long-term exposure is thought to increase the risk of lung cancer. Idling buses also waste fuel and financial resources.

PURPOSE

Eliminate all unnecessary idling by {district} school buses such that idling time is minimized in all aspects of school bus operation.

BUS IDLING MYTHS

Myth: It's important to warm up the engine with a long idle period, especially in cold

weather.

Fact: With today's school bus engines, bus and engine manufacturers routinely suggest a warm-up time of less than five minutes. In fact, running an engine at low speed (idling) causes significantly more wear on internal parts compared to driving at regular speeds.

Myth: It's better for an engine to run at low speed (idling) than to run at regular speeds.

Fact: Running an engine at low speed causes twice the wear on internal parts compared to driving at regular speeds.

Myth: The engine must be kept running in order to operate the school bus safety equipment (flashing lights, stop sign). It's impossible to run this equipment off the internal circuitry of the bus because the battery will run down.

Fact: Safety equipment can be operated without the engine running through re-wired circuitry for up to an hour with no ill-effects on the electrical system of the bus.

Myth: Idling is necessary to keep the cabin comfortable.

Fact: Depending on the weather, many buses will maintain a comfortable interior temperature for a while without idling. Idling is also not an efficient way to keep the cabin warm. Bus routes should be timed so children and drivers do not need to spend a lot of extra time on the bus when it is not en route, particularly in hot or cold weather. In addition, auxiliary heaters can be purchased and installed to keep the cabin comfortable.

Myth: It’s better to just leave the engine idling because a "cold start" produces more pollution.

Fact: A recent EPA study found that the emission pulse measured after the school bus is restarted contains less carbon monoxide, nitrogen oxides and other pollutants than if the school bus idled continuously over a ten minute period. The analysis indicated that continuous idling for more than three minutes emitted finer particle (soot) emissions than at restart.

GUIDANCE

A. **Policy Implementation**

1. Beginning immediately, the **{School District}** requires all buses to limit idling while on school grounds to <u>less than five minutes</u>. Adhering to this limit will improve surrounding air quality; protect the health of drivers, students and others; conserve fuel (save money); and decrease engine wear.

2. All school bus drivers shall receive a copy of this policy at the beginning of every school year.

B. **Guidelines to Reduce Exposure to School Bus Exhaust Emissions**

This rule applies to any bus service, including home-to-school, school activities or charter transportation.

1. Bus idling on school grounds shall not exceed five minutes in all cases, except as noted under "Exceptions."
2. When school bus drivers arrive at loading or unloading areas to drop off or pick up passengers, they should turn off their buses as soon as possible to eliminate idling time and reduce harmful emissions. The school bus should not be restarted until it is ready to depart and there is a clear path to exit the pick-up area.
3. At school bus depots, limit the idling time during early morning warm-up to what is recommended by the manufacturer (generally three to five minutes) in all but the coldest weather.
4. Buses should not idle while waiting for students during field trips, extracurricular activities or other events where students are transported off school grounds.
5. In colder weather, schools are directed to provide a space inside the school where bus drivers who arrive early can wait.
6. In colder weather, if the warmth of the bus is an issue, idling is to be at a very minimum and occur outside the school zone. The "warmed" bus is to enter the school zone as close to pick-up time as possible to maintain warmth and then shut down.
7. All service delivery vehicles shall turn off the engines while making deliveries to school buildings.
8. Transportation Operations staff are directed to revise bus schedules so school bus caravanning can be avoided and the cleanest buses assigned to the longest routes.
9. During morning start-up, buses should idle no longer than necessary to bring engines to proper operating temperature, defrost all windows and operate all heaters, air conditioners or other equipment to ensure the safety and health of the driver and passengers.
10. Signs should be prominently posted on school grounds to remind all (car, bus and truck) drivers of our school's idling policy.

C. Conflict Resolution

Bus drivers, employees and visitors are expected to honor the anti-idling policy at all school buildings and facilities by shutting off their engines upon arrival. Individual complaints or concerns regarding the implementation and/or enforcement of this policy should be discussed with the school bus fleet manager, **{designated person}**, who will contact the individual bus driver. Concerns about staff or parents who idle their vehicles on school grounds can be directed to **{designated person}** at **{phone #}**.

D. **Enforcement of Policy**

All persons share in the responsibility of adhering to and enforcing this policy. Any person violating this policy will be subject to the similar disciplinary actions that accompany other infractions of our policies including:

1. Oral reminder
2. Written reprimand
3. Probation

REFERENCES

1. *Indoor Air Quality Tools for Schools,* U.S. EPA, http://www.epa.gov/iaq/schools.

2. *Sample Idling Policy*, Clean School Bus USA, U.S. EPA, http://www.epa.gov/cleanschoolbus/idling_policy.htm

3. National Idle Reduction Campaign, Clean School Bus USA, U.S. EPA, http://www.epa.gov/cleanschoolbus/idling_policy.htm