



# Turn the Key—Be Idle Free!

**A Clean Air Program of Chatham Township and Chatham Borough**

**Established 2006 Updated: January 2026**

## **Helping our communities to reduce vehicular idling, pollution, and comply with New Jersey Vehicular Idling Laws**

Have you ever left your vehicle running while. . .

- waiting to pick up your children after school or at sports practices and after sports events?
- running errands?
- listening to music, talking on your mobile device, or scrolling through social media?

Because many of us idle our cars without even thinking about it, the Chatham Township Environmental Commission (CTEC) created the “Turn the Key—Be Idle Free” Program for the benefit of The Chathams. Chatham Township, Chatham Borough, the School District of the Chathams, local businesses, houses of worship, PTOs, and others have been participating in our Program since its inception almost 20 years ago. You’ve probably seen the CTEC-designed street signs all over our community which help to raise awareness of vehicular idling, reduce pollution, and help us all to comply with the long-standing New Jersey vehicular idling laws.

### **Engine Idling:**

- **Wastes gasoline** Just 10 seconds of idling uses more gasoline than restarting your car.
- **Harms your engine and exhaust system** It only takes 30 seconds to warm-up your car engine and be ready to go. When you idle your engine, fuel combustion is incomplete and fuel residues condense on cylinder walls where they can contaminate oil and damage engine components. Condensation in your vehicle's exhaust system can also lead to corrosion.
- **Hurts our air quality and our environment** An idling engine produces twice as many exhaust emissions as an engine in a moving vehicle. Car tailpipes emit carcinogens and other toxins, smog-forming chemicals, and greenhouse gases into our air.

### **Health Alert:**

- **Children are especially vulnerable to air pollution.** They breathe faster than we do, and they also inhale more air per pound of body weight. Air quality is often worse in the afternoon, just about the time parents arrive at the school to pick up their children. Idling engines affect the air quality around the school - just when our excited, active children come outside.
- **You are not safe from air pollution inside an idling vehicle.** Exposure to air pollutants is actually higher inside an idling vehicle than at the roadside. The greatest exposure occurs when sitting in traffic congestion on highways or in a line-up of idling vehicles at a transit stop or outside of a school.

### **It's the law**

**Idling laws limit vehicular idling to 3 minutes (few exceptions) and idling is NOT permitted for the purpose of heating or cooling the driver or passengers.** Motor vehicle statute C. 39:3-70.2 ; both Motor Vehicle and Traffic Act, C. 39:3-70.2, and Air Pollution Control Act, C. 26:2C-1 and N.J.A.C. 7:27-14 and N.J.A.C. 7:27-15

**Does your school need a “No Idling” sign? Do you want to host an Idle Free Event at your school? Do you have questions or want additional information? Please reach out to [administrator@chathamtownship.org](mailto:administrator@chathamtownship.org)**



# State of New Jersey

July, 2010

CHRIS CHRISTIE

BOBMARTIN  
*Governor Commissioner*  
KIM GUADAGNO  
*Lt. Governor*

**The New Jersey Department of Environmental Protection** would like to take this opportunity to remind you, especially with the colder weather coming, to be mindful of excessive idling.

As you may know, state law restricts idling diesel or gasoline engines to no more than three minutes under most circumstances, and is applicable to ALL the vehicles under your and/or school control, including those buses transporting students to events at other schools and while on field trips. Employees, vendors, visitors and parents must also abide by the limit.

Refer to the attached for updates to the laws and the additional information.

Message-----

From: dca.state.nj.us-- **The New Jersey Department of Environmental Protection**

Sent: **Tuesday, October 05, 2010** 11:15 AM

THIS E-MAIL HAS BEEN SENT TO THE FOLLOWING OFFICIALS: Municipal Clerks / County Freeholder Board Clerks



## State of New Jersey

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# FAQ

## Frequently Asked Questions About N.J.'s Idling Restrictions

Updated July, 2010

NOTE: This document is intended to answer commonly asked questions about N.J.'s idling restrictions, "Control and Prohibition of Air Pollution From Diesel-Powered Motor Vehicles", N.J.A.C. 7:27-14 and "Control and Prohibition of Air Pollution From Gasoline-Fueled Motor Vehicles", N.J.A.C. 7:27-15. For a full copy of the regulations, see [www.StopTheSoot.org](http://www.StopTheSoot.org).

**1. Am I allowed to idle my diesel truck while I'm sleeping in it?** Currently, idling is allowed for heating or air-conditioning a sleeper cab while the driver or another driver is sleeping or resting in the sleeper berth in a non-residential area. An enforcement officer may need to confirm that there is someone sleeping in the sleeper berth. Idling is not allowed to provide heat or air-conditioning for pets.

This exemption for most sleeper berth-equipped vehicles will expire on May 1, 2011. After that date, only those vehicles with sleeper berths that have a model year 2007 or newer engine, or have been retrofitted with a diesel particulate filter, will be allowed to idle past the three-minute limit.

Drivers and trucking companies are encouraged to use alternatives to engine idling for temperature control that will save fuel and maintenance costs such as alternate power units or plug-in power.

**2. How long am I allowed to idle to warm up my diesel engine?** When the ambient temperature is below 25 degrees Fahrenheit, a motor vehicle may idle for 15 consecutive minutes when the vehicle has been stopped for 3 or more hours. Otherwise, idling is limited to 3 minutes. However, most diesel engines take 3 minutes or less to warm up (consult the engine manufacturer's recommendations). Limiting idling will save fuel and money.

**3. Will I get a ticket for idling while I am waiting for passengers to board my bus?** Idling is allowed for no more than 15 consecutive minutes in a 60-minute period while passengers are actively loading and unloading buses only if the bus needs to run the heat or air-conditioner for passengers already on-board. However, buses cannot idle for extended periods of time while claiming to be waiting for passengers, such as a tour bus on a layover waiting for the group to return.

**4. Are school buses subject to the 3 minute idling limit?** Yes, but school buses are encouraged to eliminate ALL idling except for when they are sitting in traffic. School districts are encouraged to sign a No Idling Pledge, in which they agree to implement practices to eliminate or reduce idling (see [www.StopTheSoot.org](http://www.StopTheSoot.org)). Because children are especially vulnerable to the effects of diesel exhaust, drivers should turn off engines even when loading and unloading students. Diesel exhaust from queuing school buses enter the school buses behind them and often enter a school's ventilation system where the entire school population is exposed.



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School vehicles that are transporting medically needy students are allowed to idle to reach the temperature needed to meet the student's medical needs. In these cases, the driver should have documentation on-board that identifies the student and the necessary temperature requirements.

**5. Are there exceptions to allow idling for more than 3 minutes?** Yes. Diesel vehicles whose primary power source (engine) is necessary for operation of mechanical devices such as refrigerated trailers commonly called reefers, hydraulic lift gate pumps, air leveling equipment, cherry-pickers, etc. Some turbo-diesel engines, especially newer models, require approximately 3 to 5 minutes of idling to cool down the engine and avoid damage. These vehicles will be allowed to idle for a length of time necessary for cooling as determined by the engine manufacturer and set with automatic timers.

In addition to these situations, armored trucks are exempt from idling requirements for several reasons. In order to assure the security of the cargo and drivers, these vehicles' engines must be on at all times. The windows of armored vehicles cannot be rolled down, which results in temperatures inside the vehicle that can be harmful to occupants. Most armored vehicle companies require that one person be in these vehicles at all times and this passenger would be exposed to dangerous temperatures.

Vehicles that are transporting livestock that need to be temperature controlled are exempt from the 3 minute idling requirement.

Vehicles that serve as portable service operations, where customers enter the vehicles to receive services or make purchases, are exempt from the 3 minute idling requirement only if the engine must be on to provide electricity, air conditioning or heat to the service portion of the vehicle. This would include vehicles like libraries on wheels, bloodmobiles and Snap-On Tools trucks.

**6. Are there medical exemptions to allow idling?**

Yes. If, for example, a truck driver needs to use a CPAP machine while sleeping to treat sleep apnea and has no alternate source of power other than the vehicle's main engine, idling is allowed while the driver is sleeping in a sleeper cab.

Vehicles that transport medically needy passengers and have no alternate power source are allowed to idle to meet the temperature requirements of the patients on-board, and to power necessary medical equipment. Drivers should keep documentation of the patient's temperature needs to show enforcement officers.

**7. Does idling my asphalt truck to warm the asphalt qualify for the exemption at 14.3(b)2?**

The exemption located at N.J.A.C. 7:27-14.3(b)2 is applicable only to those vehicles whose primary diesel engine is used for operations, other than propulsion, passenger compartment heating and passenger compartment air conditioning, that are specifically designed by the truck manufacturer. Asphalt trucks are designed to have a separate power source that provides the heat necessary to treat the asphalt, so asphalt trucks that use exhaust gas to "warm" the asphalt in the bed of the truck do not qualify for this exemption.

**8. Am I allowed to idle while my diesel vehicle is being repaired?** Yes, as long as someone is actively working on the vehicle and the vehicle needs to be running to ensure effective diagnosis and repair.



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**9. If my vehicle is waiting to be inspected, am I allowed to idle?** Yes, vehicles can idle while being inspected or waiting to be inspected by a State or Federal motor vehicle inspector when the vehicle needs to be running to ensure effective diagnosis and repair. However, if you are waiting in line, shutting off the engine will save fuel and money as well as benefit the environment.

**10. Can I idle my vehicle to regenerate my diesel particulate filter (DPF)?**

Most diesel particulate filters “regenerate” or clean themselves during normal operation of the vehicle. For these vehicles, driving on the normal driving cycle will keep the filter clean and operating correctly. For a few vehicles that are model year 2007 or later, the regeneration cycle can only occur while the vehicle is parked and idling. In these circumstances only, the exemption at N.J.A.C. 7:27-14.3(b)5 applies while the DPF is regenerating. For these vehicles, there is an indicator light in the cab that shows that regeneration is occurring. Enforcement inspectors and police officers will need to see this light in order to ensure that idling is happening for DPF regeneration purposes only.

**11. Are Alternate Power Units (APUs) subject to idling regulations?** APUs are devices attached to diesel vehicles that can power the vehicle’s heating and air conditioning systems without the need to have the engine turned on. These devices allow truck drivers to sleep comfortably without the noise, smell and health effects of diesel exhaust. In addition, APUs are cost-effective and often pay for themselves within a year or two of installation due to reduced fuel costs and less frequent maintenance. At the current time, APUs are not subject to idling restrictions. Information on APUs is available from USEPA at <http://www.epa.gov/otaq/smartway/transport/what-smartway/verified-technologies.htm#idle> .

**12. What if my vehicle is stuck in traffic for more than 3 minutes?** Motor vehicles stopped in traffic are exempt from the 3 minute idling limit. However, if the traffic is not moving, shutting off the engine will save fuel and money as well as benefit the environment. **13. Are emergency vehicles allowed to idle?** By their nature, emergency vehicles such as fire, police, ambulances or public utility trucks may need to keep engines running to operate emergency equipment when they are engaged in the process of performing emergency services. They are exempt from idling restrictions, but only when actively being used for emergency services. Police vehicles are exempt if idling is necessary to power on-board computers. **14. Are regular gasoline-powered vehicles subject to idling restrictions?** Yes, gasoline-powered motor vehicles are subject to similar idling restrictions including a 3 minute limit on idling (see [N.J.A.C. 7:27-15](#)). However, diesel vehicles emit much more fine particulate matter, commonly called soot, than do gasoline-powered vehicles and they will continue to be the subject of increased enforcement oversight.

**15. Are off-road construction vehicles subject to the 3 minute idling limit?**

Yes, subject to the existing exemptions.

**16. Will DEP still enforce the 3 minute idling limit now that the sweep is over?** These regulations have been in place since the mid-1980s and we will continue to enforce them as part



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of the Department's renewed emphasis on reducing fine particulate matter from diesel vehicles. Reducing idling also conserves fuel and reduces greenhouse gases.

**17. Who can enforce the regulations besides DEP?** Nearly all county health departments have been delegated authority to enforce the Department's air regulations, which include the idling standards. In addition, State and local police departments can enforce the standard on public roadways and on private property. Additional information on how to cite violations is available at <http://www.stopthesoot.org/sts-idle-enforce.htm> .

**18. Am I exempt from New Jersey's idling requirements if my vehicle has been designated by CARB as a "Certified Clean Idle" vehicle?**

The "Certified Clean Idle" designation and accompanying sticker apply to diesel vehicles of model year 2008 or newer, which are sold with diesel particulate filters. In California, no idling beyond 5 minutes is allowed, including idling for sleeper berth use, so vehicles with the "Certified Clean Idle" sticker are allowed to idle while the driver is using the sleeper berth only. In New Jersey, vehicles with this sticker are allowed to idle beyond 3 minutes ONLY while the driver is sleeping or resting in the sleeper berth pursuant to N.J.A.C. 7:27-14.3(b)7 or if the vehicle qualifies for one of the listed exemptions specifically detailed in the idling regulation ( [http://www.state.nj.us/dep/aqm/Sub14\\_Rule.pdf](http://www.state.nj.us/dep/aqm/Sub14_Rule.pdf)). Please note that this sleeper berth exemption will no longer apply after May 1, 2011.

**19. Will reducing idling really make a significant difference in reducing soot?**

According to the USEPA, the U.S. Department of Energy, and other organizations, the average long-haul truck idles at least 1,830 hours per year, and, in the process, uses \$4,400 of unnecessary fuel and emits 17 tons of carbon dioxide, 10 pounds of fine particles and 615 pounds of nitrogen oxides every year. Reducing idling will lower maintenance costs on each vehicle, save fuel and protect public health and air quality.

**20. Wouldn't the continual shutting off and turning on of diesel engines actually damage the engine and emit more soot than idling?**

Idling an engine for more than about 10 seconds actually uses more fuel than if the engine had been turned off. It is more efficient to turn an engine off if it will be stopped for more than 10 seconds. Frequent restarts of an engine will not have a negative impact on engine components.

**21. Isn't it bad to drive a cold engine if it hasn't been warmed up?**

Electronically controlled engines need no more than about 30 seconds to warm up. Driving a vehicle cuts warm-up times in half. The best way to warm up an engine is by driving it, while avoiding rapid acceleration and high speeds for approximately the first four miles in cold weather.

**22. Whom should I contact with questions or complaints?**

**DEP 24-hour Hotline – for reporting suspected violations** (877) WARN DEP (877 927-6337)  
DEP Diesel Risk Reduction Program (609) 292-7953 -- for general questions Northern Field Office (973) 656-4444 for complaints in Bergen, Essex, Hudson, Hunterdon, Morris, Passaic, Somerset, Sussex, Union and Warren counties Central Field Office (609) 292-3187 for



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complaints in Burlington, Mercer, Middlesex, Monmouth, and Ocean counties Southern Field Office (856) 614-3601 for complaints in Atlantic, Camden, Cape May, Cumberland, Gloucester and Salem counties.



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# DIESEL SCHOOL BUSES AND CHILDREN'S HEALTH: *WHAT YOU NEED TO KNOW*

## Safety first

School buses are the safest mode of student transportation, according to the School Bus Information Council, but we can make them much safer by eliminating unnecessary idling.

- ⌚ 14,500 school buses operated in New Jersey in 2003
- ⌚ Each child rides a school bus an average of 1.5 hours per day

## It's the law!!

New Jersey law prohibits idling by diesel vehicles (most school buses and large trucks) for more than three minutes.

- ⌚ Call (877) WARN-DEP to report idling
- ⌚ Eliminating unnecessary idling promotes good health and saves money

## What you should do

New Jersey school districts and school-bus drivers are encouraged to protect our children's health by implementing best practices to reduce harmful diesel emissions. These best practices include:

- ⌚ Turning off engines when waiting to load and unload students
- ⌚ Replacing oldest buses in the fleet first as they often release the most emissions
- ⌚ Using newest buses for longest routes
- ⌚ Maintaining buses to eliminate any visible exhaust
- ⌚ Developing strategies to prevent buses from queuing

- ⌚ Keeping bus windows open while in transit when comfort allows
- ⌚ Encouraging children to sit in front seats if bus is not full
- ⌚ Avoiding congested roads when possible
- ⌚ Avoiding directly following other diesel vehicles

## Learn more

Visit [www.StopTheSoot.org](http://www.StopTheSoot.org)

## Why school-bus idling is harmful

⌚ Diesel exhaust is a likely human carcinogen, containing fine particles, commonly called “soot.”

⌚ Children are especially affected by soot because their lungs are still developing and they breathe 50 percent more air per pound of body weight than adults.

⌚ Fine particles pose a significant health threat because they easily reach deep into the lungs.

⌚ Diesel exhaust worsens asthma, bronchitis and existing allergies and may contribute to decreased lung function, lung cancer and heart disease.

⌚ Diesel exhaust ranks among the air pollutants that the EPA believes pose the greatest public health risks.

⌚ Between 10 percent to 13 percent of all students in grades K-12 have asthma.

State of New Jersey  
Department of Environmental Protection  
Lisa P. Jackson, Commissioner

NJDEP's new "FAQ July 2010"

\*\*\*NJDE's new "School Bus Fact Sheet"

\*\*\*NJDEPs "Health Concerns Info Flyer"