



STATE OF CONNECTICUT  
DEPARTMENT OF ENVIRONMENTAL PROTECTION



79 ELM STREET HARTFORD, CT 06106-5127

PHONE: 860-424-3001

April 25, 2005

Gina McCarthy  
Commissioner

Dear Superintendent:

The health risks associated with exposure to diesel exhaust are a concern for all of us who care about the welfare of Connecticut schoolchildren. Numerous scientific studies have shown that diesel pollution can aggravate asthma, cause lung damage and increase the likelihood for developing other serious health problems. A recent study conducted by Yale University researchers in conjunction with Environment and Human Health Inc., clearly shows that idling school buses are a major contributor to the diesel exhaust exposure of children. School bus exhaust can compromise air quality on and around buses, including nearby sidewalks, school yards, playgrounds, and can even lead to poor indoor air quality inside school buildings. School bus drivers can contribute to a healthier environment by limiting engine idling whenever practical. Reducing idling is a simple, cost effective way to reduce children's exposure to air pollution.

The Connecticut Association of School Transportation Officials (COSTA) joined the Connecticut Department of Environmental Protection (DEP) in recognizing the very serious threat diesel exhaust poses to our children's health and the quality of the air we all breath. They support DEP's efforts to reduce idling. We must all work together to protect our children. In 2002, DEP had great success collaborating with COSTA on a Memorandum of Understanding on idling, and gained pledges from bus drivers to turn their engines off. However, the effort to reduce unnecessary idling must continue. You can help us by ensuring that your transportation director is aware of the health risks from idling and the Connecticut state regulation (§22a-174-18(b)(3)(C)) that establishes a limit on the amount of time motor vehicles are permitted to idle. I am enclosing a factsheet on school bus idling, produced by the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA).

To assist your efforts, DEP is offering "No-Idling Signs" free of charge to Connecticut Public Schools that agree to post them. No-Idling Signs have been proven effective in reminding school bus drivers, as well as parents, that the simple act of turning off an engine can protect air quality and thereby help reduce the threat to our children's health. We encourage you to join with school districts across Connecticut by posting No-Idling signs. Please fill out and return the enclosed form, and we will contact you as soon as your signs are ready. If you have any questions, Allison O'Neil of my staff is available at (860) 424-3924 to assist you. We look forward to working with you to reduce unnecessary idling and to protect the health and environment of children in your care.

Yours truly,

Gina McCarthy  
Commissioner

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