

Testimony Submitted in support of S.13 – School Bus Idling

February 8, 2007

Dear Education Committee Members,

Although I will not be able to attend the hearing on February 9, 2007 related to S.13, a bill before your committee related to school bus idling, I would like to provide the following testimony in support of passage of the bill.

I currently serve as a member of the City of Burlington's No Idling Steering Committee and also serve on the advisory committee for Idle Free Vermont, a grassroots network of Vermonters concerned about unnecessary vehicle idling.

To accompany my testimony, I've included information provided by the Environmental Protection Agency on the effects and myths associated with school bus idling. A sample school bus idling policy suggested by the EPA is provided for your review, together with the current diesel idling policies adopted by North Country Union High School and the Burlington School District. These policies can serve as a model for other Vermont school districts and private bus companies to follow.

I hope that the Education committee will look closely at S.13 and choose to amend the bill to include buses on and off school property. It is not uncommon to observe school buses idling for long periods of time on school field trips and during athletic events. This bill will go a long way to ensuring the health of school children and to encourage reductions in the other forms of vehicle idling that take place on school grounds.

Thank you for your consideration of this testimony and please feel free to contact me if I can provide additional information.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Jim Flint".

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EPA Clean School Bus USA / National Idle-Reduction Campaign

<http://www.epa.gov/cleanschoolbus/antiidling.htm>

Clean School Bus USA's newly launched National Idle-Reduction Campaign is a public information campaign that recognizes the important role of the school bus driver as a professional, who is responsible for the safety and security of children. The National Idle-Reduction Campaign:

- Provides an opportunity for bus drivers, teachers, and children to learn about air quality and diesel emissions.
- Recognizes the positive contribution being made by school bus drivers.
- Promotes idle-reduction as one of the easiest ways to save money by not wasting fuel, reducing wear and tear on engines, protecting drivers' health and the health of children, and improving air quality.

Air Pollution, Wasted Fuel, Higher Operating Costs

Unnecessary idling by school buses can pollute the air inside and around the bus. Exhaust from buses can also enter school buildings through air intakes, doors, and open windows.

Idling buses waste fuel and money. Typical school bus engines burn about half a gallon of fuel per hour of idling. School districts that eliminate unnecessary idling can save significant dollars in fuel costs each year.

Engine Wear-and-Tear

School bus engines do not need to idle more than a few minutes to warm up. In fact extended idling causes engine damage. Engine manufacturers generally recommend no more than three to five minutes of idling. Caterpillar, Incorporated cautions drivers to "... avoid excess idling. If the vehicle is parked for more than five minutes, stop the engine. Excessive idling can cause carbon buildup and/or excessive idling can cause the engine to slobber. This is harmful to the engine." IC Corporation's engine manual states that "...excessive idling reduces fuel economy, and may decrease oil life." Cummins suggests idling for only three to five minutes before operating with a load.

School 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.

Sample School Bus Idling Policy from the EPA

http://www.epa.gov/cleanschoolbus/idling_policy.htm

Applicability	This policy applies to the operation of every district-owned and/or 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.
Guidance	<ol style="list-style-type: none">1. 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. Exceptions include conditions that would compromise passenger safety, such as extreme weather conditions and idling in traffic.2. At school bus depots, limit the idling time during early morning warm-up to what is recommended by the manufacturer (generally 3-5 minutes) in all but the coldest weather.3. Buses should not idle while waiting for students during field trips, extracurricular activities or other events where students are transported off school grounds.4. In colder weather, schools are directed to provide a space inside the school where bus drivers who arrive early can wait.5. 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.6. All service delivery vehicles shall turn off the engines while making deliveries to school buildings.7. Transportation Operations staff are directed to revise bus schedules so that school bus caravanning can be avoided and the cleanest buses assigned to the longest routes.8. All drivers shall receive a copy of this bulletin at the beginning of every school year.

Diesel Idling Policy – Burlington School District

<http://bsdweb.bsdrv.org/Board/policy/eh.htm>

The Burlington School District, in concern for the safety and health of students and staff, is aware that diesel emissions frequently pervade various portions of the building when school buses and delivery vehicles are idling adjacent to said buildings.

Therefore, Burlington School District will request the following procedures from school buses and diesel delivery and service vehicles:

1. All school buses will be asked to warm up their engines away from the school.
2. All buses dropping off and picking up students adjacent to school will be asked to turn off their engines immediately upon arrival at school and leave engines off until the buses are ready to depart.
3. All delivery vehicles servicing the Burlington School District will be asked to turn off their engines while deliveries are underway. An exception to this may be the need for emergency delivery of fuel in order to provide necessary heat for school operation. Delivery times for these vehicles will be requested before school is in session or after school is dismissed for the day.
4. A copy of this policy will accompany any contract for services that require delivery to the school.

FIRST READING: October 14, 2003

SECOND READING and ADOPTION: November 11, 2003

NORTH COUNTRY UNION HIGH SCHOOL DISTRICT TRANSPORTATION POLICY NO. I. 6

http://www.ncuhs.org/policypro_assets/I.6.pdf

DIESEL IDLING POLICY

The North Country Union High School District, in concern for the safety and health of students and staff are aware that diesel emissions frequently pervade various portions of the building when school buses and delivery vehicles are idling adjacent to said buildings.

Therefore, North Country Union High School and North Country Union Junior High School enacts the following policy relating to school buses and diesel delivery and service vehicles:

- 1) All school buses will warm up their engines at a site away from the school.
- 2) All buses dropping off and picking up students adjacent to the school will turn off their engines immediately upon arrival at the school and leave engines off until the buses are ready to depart.
- 3) All delivery vehicles, servicing the NCUHS and NCUJHS will turn off their engines while deliveries are underway.

The only exception will be emergency delivery of fuel in order to provide necessary heat for school operation. Delivery times for these vehicles will be scheduled before school is in session or after school is dismissed for the day.

- 4) A copy of this policy will accompany any contract for services that require delivery to the school. Delivery schedules will be managed by the Business Manager at North Country Union High School. Delivery schedules at North Country Union Junior High School will be managed by the Business Manager and the Principal or his or her designee.

Adopted: March 8, 2001