



West Virginia Asthma Coalition
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School Bus Idling and Your Child's Asthma

In West Virginia, over 210,000 students ride the school bus. Diesel exhaust from idling school buses can accumulate on and around the bus and pose a health risk particularly to children. The Environmental Protection Agency and the American Lung Association rank diesel exhaust among the air pollutants that post the greatest public health risk. Exposure to diesel exhaust can cause lung damage, worsen asthma symptoms, and cause asthma attacks.

What can be done about it?

“Reduce Idling” Policy and Law

The West Virginia Department of Education has had a policy, WV BOE Policy 4336, in place since 2007 to reduce the idling of buses near schools. This policy regulates the school buses idling by stating:

- In normal weather, a school bus operator shall not idle the bus while waiting for or loading students.
- Buses will be allowed to idle when the temperature is 40 degrees Fahrenheit or colder, when needed to defrost driving windows, when the safety or comfort of the students is in question, or when emergency requires it.
- School bus operators are prohibited from idling the buses for more than 10 minutes unless defrosting the windows and then idling shall be limited to thirty minutes.

A new rule, **Senate Bill 183**, signed into law May 13, 2010 **Restricts idling of Diesel-Powered Motor Vehicles**.

The law states: No driver or owner of a diesel-powered motor vehicle with a gross vehicle weight of ten thousand one pounds or more engaged in commerce may cause, and no owner or operator of the location where the vehicle loads, unloads or parks, may allow the engine of the vehicle to idle for more than five minutes in any continuous sixty- minute period, except as provided under section three of this article. **§17C-13A-3**. Drivers who don't follow the new law could face a fine of up to \$300. To view the entire law go to http://www.legis.state.wv.us/bill_status.

What Can We Do to Protect Our Children?

As parents and teachers, we need to make our school principals, county superintendents, and bus drivers aware of the “no idling” policy and to make certain those individuals obey it. Encourage other parents to also follow the “no idling” rule too! To reduce the chance of being exposed to exhaust from other vehicles, either diesel or gasoline, follow other vehicles at least three car lengths behind to reduce the health risks associated with vehicle exhaust.

The West Virginia Asthma Coalition along with the American Lung Association encourages you to be aware of asthma triggers, such as vehicle exhaust, that are more common during the fall and winter months at home and at school. To find out more information, go to www.lungusa.org, or for more information on diesel exhaust visit the Environmental Protection Agency website at www.epa.gov/ne/eco/diesel.