

Raising Awareness about the Dangers of Idling

November 14, 2011

(Livingston, NJ) – We’ve all done it at one time or another, especially when it’s cold. Whether waiting for a child outside the school, posting mail, shopping, or waiting for a companion, idling the car has become an expensive habit. Thousands of gallons of gas are wasted each day, and millions of particles pollute the air we breathe all because of comfort or inattention. In response to resident’s concerns, the Livingston Township Council, in collaboration with a volunteer committee, has issued a resolution in support of “No Idling” and the State law that’s was updated in 2007. The resolution’s (R-11-224) aim is to educate the public about the dangers and cost of idling a car. The cost refers not only to the economic waste of money, but to health issues and environmental damage caused by the exhaust from an idling engine.

Idling gets ZERO miles per gallon and every two minutes of idling takes the same amount of fuel as driving one mile. Idling cars also spew out the same amount of health damaging pollutants as moving cars including nitrogen oxide, carbon monoxide and volatile organic compounds. There are numerous scientific studies which have found links between exposure to fine particles and health effects including premature death, and increased incidents of asthma, allergies, and other breathing disorders. According to the United States Environmental Protection Agency, diesel exhaust is also likely to be carcinogenic to humans.

“Children, the elderly, and those with asthma and other chronic health problems are especially vulnerable to the health dangers of exhaust fumes,” explained Sue Fershing, Chair of the Recycling and Reclamation Committee – the group of volunteers working on the anti-idling effort. “And the environmental damage caused by idling cars is incalculable in terms of its contribution to the formation of greenhouse gases and ozone damage, now and for future generations.”

A car only requires 30 seconds to warm the engine during winter months, and the engine warms twice as quickly while being driven than standing still. Excess idling causes a wearing down of engine parts including cylinders, spark plugs, and exhaust systems which over time will degrade the engine’s performance, reducing mileage and increasing fuel consumption. Idling a car in a garage, even with the door open, is extremely dangerous and exposes the driver to carbon monoxide and other noxious gases. If the garage is attached, those fumes can also enter the house. The current New Jersey State law prohibits the idling of vehicles for more than three minutes, and studies have shown that an anti-idling policy will save fuel, prolong engine life, and improve air quality.

“This new resolution which supports the adoption of a strong anti-idling policy by government agencies, schools, businesses, and other organizations within the Township of Livingston is designed to raise awareness about the dangers of idling. We would also encourage

residents to be mindful about idling especially around schools to minimize exposure to vehicle emissions to children,” continued Fershing.

“The Township Council and the Recycling and Reclamation Committee promotes a broad education of the public about the health, environmental, and economic impacts of idling and ways to reduce idling,” Fershing added. “This is an issue that affects us all. And we ask residents to make the right choice and turn off your engines. Turn The Key, Be Idle Free!” The Committee is distributing bookmarks with this message as a reminder.

For more information on Livingston Township committees, eco-friendly Initiatives, ordinances or resolutions visit www.livingstonnj.org. The Municipal Building is located at 333-357 South Livingston Ave. Offices are open between 8:30-4:30 pm, Monday thru Friday, except for holidays.