

Common idling myths and facts:

MYTH: The engine needs to be warmed up before driving.

FACT: In South Carolina's climate, most engines do not require warming up. In colder weather, excessive idling can be damaging to the engine. It is best to "warm up" for no more than 30 seconds (3-5 minutes for buses) and drive slowly for the first few minutes.

MYTH: Idling is good for the engine.

FACT: Idling for extended periods can be harder on your engine than restarting and can cause excessive wear.

MYTH: Idling is better than restarting the engine.

FACT: With today's vehicles, you will save fuel by turning off your engine if you expect to wait longer than 30 seconds (3-5 minutes for buses), and restarting when you're ready to go again. Idling wastes fuel and produces more air pollution than restarting.

MYTH: If you can't see or smell emissions coming out vehicle tailpipes, there are none.

FACT: Most air pollution is invisible and odorless, so just because you can't see or smell emissions coming out the tailpipes, it is still there.

Don't be caught idling. Take action!

- Limit warm-up idling to 30 seconds, even in cold weather.
- Turn off your engine if you expect to be stopped for more than 30 seconds (except in traffic).
- Avoid drive-through windows (banks, pharmacies and fast-food restaurants). Park and go inside.
- Carpool, walk, bike or take the bus whenever possible.
- Save gas by obeying the speed limit, accelerating gradually and keeping your car tuned up.
- Refuel during the cooler evening hours and do not "top off" the tank.



Other Environmental Project Opportunities

The School Flag Program

This voluntary initiative helps students, teachers, parents and their community to limit outdoor activities during unhealthy days by bringing awareness to their local air quality conditions. During the ozone forecasting season (April 1 - September 30), students raise a flag to signal the forecasted level of air pollution for that day.

Champions of the Environment

This competitive grant program rewards projects that help the environment. Any public or private school in South Carolina is eligible to apply. Projects must address one or more the following: prevention or reduction of air, land or water pollution; waste reduction; restoration, preservation or enhancement of natural areas; water or energy efficiency. Projects must have outreach/education component and must be sustainable. For more info, visit www.scdhec.gov/champions.

Green Steps Schools

This environmental education and action initiative recognizes schools in SC who take annual sustainable steps toward becoming more environmentally responsible. For more information, visit www.greenstepschools.com.

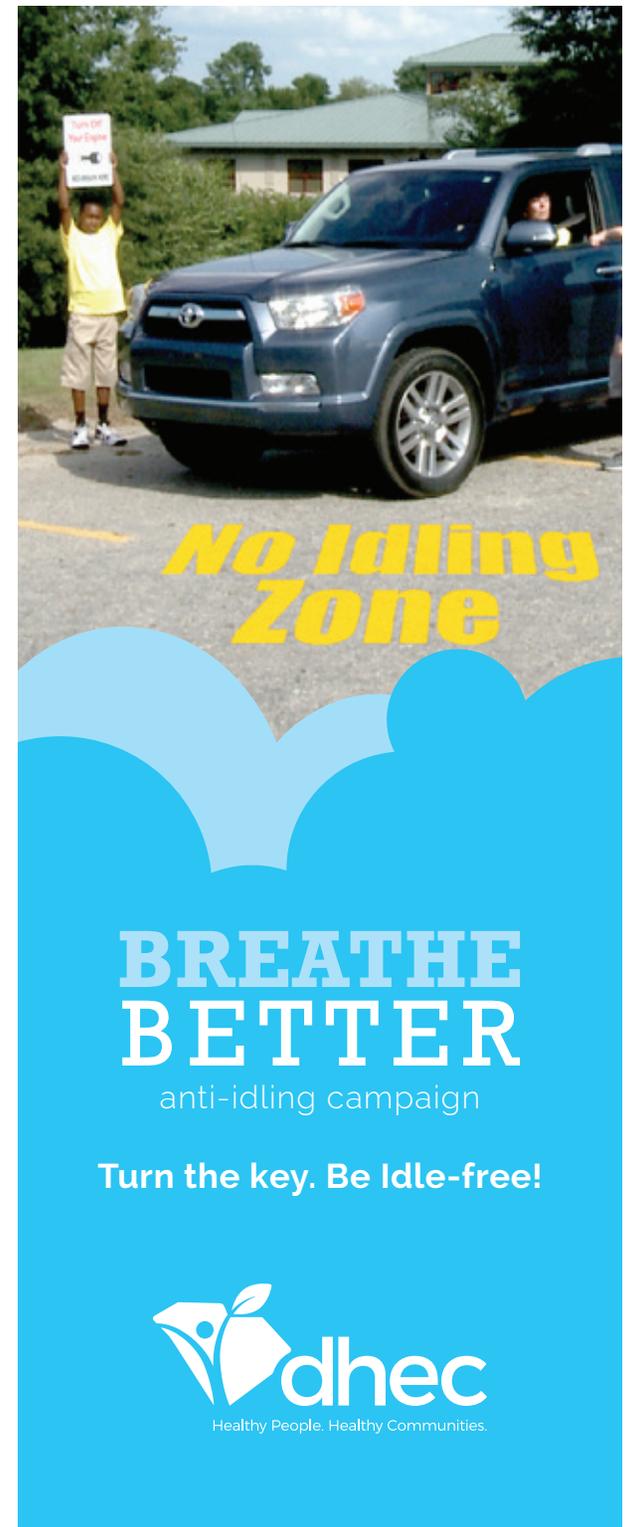
Spare the Air Awards

This annual event presented by SCDHEC highlights the efforts of community leaders who have made a voluntary commitment to implement positive changes at the workplace, within the community or at school by adopting a new policy or idea that meets the challenge of improving air quality in South Carolina. Nominations are accepted during the fall of each year. For more information, visit www.scdhec.gov/sparetheairawards.

For more information, contact one of these SC DHEC Representatives:

Debra Briggs-Monroe
Bureau of Air Quality
803-898-3752
briggsm@dhc.sc.gov

Leslie Coolidge
Bureau of Air Quality
803-898-3208
coolidl@dhc.sc.gov



Why is idling your vehicle a concern?

Mobile sources such as cars, school buses and delivery trucks are major sources of air pollution in South Carolina. A vehicle is idling when it is parked or standing, with the engine running. **Idling** wastes about a half gallon of fuel per hour and releases many pollutants that can harm human health and the environment.

Children are more sensitive to air pollution than adults because they breathe more (relative to body size) and their lungs are still developing. Pollution from vehicle exhaust has been linked to asthma and other respiratory diseases, and it increases the risk of long-term health effects. **Asthma** in particular affects approximately 90,000 children in South Carolina and is a major cause of school absences and hospitalizations. Reducing idling time, especially on school campuses, helps to protect children from unnecessary emissions that could harm their health.

Exposure to automobile fumes and air pollution including ozone can trigger an asthma attack. Some of the signs of asthma may include **shortness of breath, wheezing, tightness in the chest and coughing.**

What is Breathe Better?

Breathe Better is an anti-idling/clean air campaign. The goal is to protect the health of children by reducing harmful vehicle emissions around school campuses. **Students are taking actions**, such as educating drivers about idling, posting “no idling” signs around the school campus, and implementing other school projects aimed at improving air quality, such as planting trees and encouraging alternative modes of transportation.

The Breathe Better campaign is a voluntary initiative. It is an environmentally sustainable project that can be easily developed, implemented and maintained. There is zero cost to your school or organization to participate.



Nursery Road Elementary

In the spotlight:

Daniel Island Academy (Daniel Island, SC)

Daniel Island Academy, a private preschool in the lowcountry, successfully implemented the Breathe Better campaign. At the school’s annual fall festival, Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design (LEED) Committee members created crafts for the children, disseminated information sheets and car decals, answered questions and discussed the new anti-idling policy with parents. As a reminder throughout the year, posters were strategically placed throughout the school to encourage their continued support. Slogans included the following:

- “Ladies and Gentlemen, Stop your engines!”
- “The key to breathing better starts with you!”
- “The key to breathing better starts with turning off your engine!”
- “Turn the key to breathe better! Our school has a no idling policy!”

Williams Middle School (Florence, SC)

Williams Middle School established a partnership with the Bureau of Air Quality and the Bureau of Environmental Services Region 4 Florence staff to design and construct a kiosk. It has been a great tool in conveying the Breathe Better program’s message, “**Turn your engines off. Kids breathe here.**” Parents took notice of the school’s anti-idling policy and modified their behavior by turning their vehicle engines off while in line to pick up students. But beyond that, the kiosk was instrumental in reaching a broader audience on other important environmental issues, such as open burning, stormwater, etc.

Dover Elementary School (North, SC)

Since adopting the Breathe Better program, Dover Elementary School has created a healthier environment for students, faculty, staff and community. They successfully achieved the following:

- Saved fuel and eliminated emissions for approximately 9,000 cars and 1,250 school buses;
- Committed to practicing anti-idling on and off campus;
- Reduced the waiting period for the preschool and kindergarten carpoolers down to 5-7 minutes;
- Planned for future discussions to include expanding the Breathe Better program throughout the school district.

How can my school get started with Breathe Better?

Contact a SC DHEC Representative if you are interested in starting or supporting a similar Breathe Better campaign in your county or school district. The following steps will help you get started!

- Introduce the idea to administration, faculty, staff, parent and/or an organization.
- Meet with a SC DHEC Breathe Better representative to develop a plan and set a timeline.
- Identify faculty and/or parents to “champion” the program and form a student “Clean Air Patrol.”
- Educate parents and bus drivers about anti-idling policy (e.g., school newsletter, flyers, students presentation, etc.) and encourage their participation.
- Conduct simple data collection to monitor your progress.
- Add a “no idling” policy statement and Breathe Better logo in the student/parent handbook and/or on the school website.
- Post “no idling” signs (provided at no charge) on campus as a reminder to drivers.
- Consider other projects that will further improve air quality at your school.



A.C. Moore Elementary