

Proscribe and Educate About Vehicle Idling (Susan Sher)

The highest risk group during the coronavirus pandemic included people who suffer from lung disease and asthma, conditions that can be made worse by moderate to heavy air pollution. Protecting public health should not depend solely on our response to an emergency. Rather, preventative measures targeting a single source of air pollution can have profound effects on the overall health of our County residents. Contaminants in vehicle emissions have been directly related to significant respiratory health effects. An entirely avoidable source of harmful emissions that contribute to greenhouse gases arise from the ubiquitous idling of vehicles, i.e., running the vehicle's engine when the vehicle is not moving while drivers text, talk on phones or wait for a passenger in a store.

- One minute of idling puts more carbon monoxide in the air than smoking three packs of cigarettes.
- An hour of vehicle idling burns approximately one-fifth gallon of gas and releases nearly four pounds of CO₂ into the air.
- Children are particularly vulnerable to air pollution because they breathe faster than adults and inhale more air per pound of body weight.
- Idling a vehicle with the air conditioning on can increase emissions by 13 percent.
- It is a myth that the engine should be warmed up before driving; the best way to warm up a vehicle is by driving it.
- Another myth is that shutting off and restarting a vehicle uses more gas than leaving it running; it has been proven that over 10 seconds of idling uses more fuel than restarting the engine.

We would not be alone in this. Only one county in California (Placer) has an ordinance, and it's only for commercial vehicles. Counties in other Western states have broader ordinances:

- Park City, UT [https://parkcity.municipalcodeonline.com/book?type=ordinances#name=9-10 Anti-Idling](https://parkcity.municipalcodeonline.com/book?type=ordinances#name=9-10%20Anti-Idling)
- Cottonwood Heights, UT <http://www.cottonwoodholladayjournal.com/2018/06/21/175555/no-more-idling-incottonwood-heights>
- Holladay, UT [http://www.cityofholladay.com/img/File/No_2013-03 Idling of Vehicles.pdf](http://www.cityofholladay.com/img/File/No_2013-03%20Idling%20of%20Vehicles.pdf)
- Eugene, OR - No Idling and No Top-off Policy <https://www.eugene-or.gov/1296/No-Idle-No-Top-Off>

What may be most relevant and helpful are these actions from Contra Costa County:

- Contra Costa County officials sign on to Idle Free Pledge - April 25, 2017 [http://www.baaqmd.gov/~media/files/communications-and-outreach/publications/newsreleases/2017/idle_170425-pdf.pdf?la=en](http://www.baaqmd.gov/~/media/files/communications-and-outreach/publications/newsreleases/2017/idle_170425-pdf.pdf?la=en)
- CONTRA COSTA COUNTY Resolution [http://64.166.146.245/docs/2017/BOS/20170425_902/29390_BO Bay Area Air Quality Management District Idle Free Pledge.pdf](http://64.166.146.245/docs/2017/BOS/20170425_902/29390_BO_Bay%20Area%20Air%20Quality%20Management%20District%20Idle%20Free%20Pledge.pdf)

The CC County resolution and pledges are rather pro forma and not with much teeth. But think these things would be achievable for us in the #1 category and at a minimum, could serve as a springboard to something more profound.

A number of California cities have ordinances in place:

- Sacramento Code 10.36.090 Leaving ignition key in unattended vehicle prohibited: "It is unlawful and a misdemeanor for any person driving or in charge of a motor vehicle to permit it to stand unattended in any public place, or any used or new car lot, or private or public parking lot, without first stopping the engine, locking the ignition and removing the ignition key from the vehicle."

- Santa Cruz <http://www.cityofsantacruz.com/home/showdocument?id=42417>
- Santa Barbara <https://www.santabarbaraca.gov/civicax/filebank/blobdload.aspx?BlobID=12162>
- Palo Alto <https://www.cityofpaloalto.org/civicax/filebank/documents/65306> (this was passed later)
- related: San Jose's green fleet policy, released in 2007, aims to ensure that 100% of public fleet vehicles run on alternative fuels by 2022. Currently, 45% of the fleet runs on alternative fuel, including plug-in electric and hybrid vehicles.

Counties in other states have implemented protections that can serve as models for a innovative proclamation in our County, in particular with application to government vehicles:

- Pierce County, WA Fuel Reduction Strategy <https://www.co.pierce.wa.us/DocumentCenter/View/24920/Pierce-County-Fuel-ReductionPolicy?bidId=>
- Johnson and Wyandotte Counties, KS Idling Reduction Rule http://www.kdheks.gov/bar/download/idle_rule.pdf
- Cobb County, GA Vehicle Idling Reduction Strategies https://cobbcounty.org/images/documents/property-management/measure37-5_reduction.pdf
- Fulton County, GA No Idling Policy <http://www.fultoncountygga.gov/latest-news/1875-fulton-county-fights-smog-with-no-idlingpolicy>
- Durham County, NC Idle Reduction Policy <https://durhamnc.gov/DocumentCenter/View/944/Durham-County-Idle-Reduction-PolicyPDF?bidId=>
- City of Denver, Colorado has a very good ordinance: http://enginesoff.com/2_7_laws_ordinances.htm

Several states have anti-idling protections: <https://www.greencarcongress.com/2019/10/20191008-fotw.html> Possibly of less interest: but many, like California regulate only commercial heavy duty diesel vehicles and/or school buses. In California, there is no regulation for parked passenger vehicles although those vehicles comprise 85% of vehicles on the roads. Connecticut, Hawaii, Massachusetts, Maryland, New Hampshire, New Jersey and Vermont have laws that regulate idling of all vehicles

updated 10 April 2020

[RETURN TO THE LOW-HANGING FRUIT DOCUMENT](#)

[RETURN TO CAAC INDEX PAGE](#)