



Asthma Free School Zone REAL WORLD FOUNDATION

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MAY 5, 2009: IDLE-FREE NYC DAY

Educators, Advocates and Students Celebrate Citywide Efforts to Curb Engine Idling

New York, NY, May 5, 2009—New Yorkers gathered on the steps of City Hall today to share the many extraordinary efforts this past year to clean the air in the City. As the first American city to enact a one-minute idling law, New York celebrated its awareness-raising campaigns and issued a warning to engine-idlers in school zones.

Idle-Free NYC (I-FNYC) is a multi-channel campaign spearheaded by Asthma Free School Zone and carried out by a broad coalition of City agencies, health and environmental organizations, businesses, schools, and concerned individuals. Efforts range from institutional policy changes, installation of fleet anti-idling technology, employee trainings, neighborhood stop-idling interventions, the introduction of idling and air quality lesson plans, and school art contests. I-FNYC campaign messaging can be found on interior and exterior MTA bus posters, cup sleeves, electronic highway signs, Con Ed customer inserts and countless flyers on school and community bulletin boards.

REBECCA KALIN, Director of the Asthma Free School Zone, explained, "Once upon a time, not so long ago, New Yorkers did not understand the word 'idling'. Today, all across the City, New Yorkers are taking bold and innovative steps to stop idling where they live and work. To name a few: Companies such *Green Apple Cleaners* and *Fresh Direct* are installing anti-idling equipment; *Con Edison* is integrating 'clean diesel' technologies and presenting the Idle-Free NYC campaign company-wide. *Zip Car* is providing idling information to all customers; *Livable Cities* is piloting an Idling and Air Quality curriculum; NYC PS 166 (MN) is designing and producing a school-wide Idle-Free NYC campaign; PS 111 (MN) is partnering with two local CBOs to hold a stop-idling street intervention; a group of concerned citizens, Our Streets Our Lives, have teamed with NYC DEP to stop idling tour buses in their neighborhood. There is a lot to celebrate and there is still a lot of to do. The education must continue. The key to changing idling behavior is understanding idling issues."

Councilmember **JOHN C. LIU (D-Queens), Chairperson of the City Council Transportation Committee** and lead sponsor of the new school zone idling law signed into law on January 28, 2009, stated: "The new law is not intended to simply reduce idling time from three minutes to one minute; it is intended to improve public awareness and behavior around our schools by essentially requiring that engines be shut off right away instead of being kept on for a few minutes. Especially around schools, but also anywhere in our congested city for that matter, engines simply should not be kept running for any length of time. For the sake of everyone's lungs, just shut it off."

"The American Lung Association's 2009 State of the Air report gave F's to four of the five boroughs, detailing the incredibly toxic air that New York City residents are breathing," said **MICHAEL SEILBACK, Vice President of Public Policy & Communications with the American Lung Association in New York (ALA-NY)**. "Reducing the number of idling engines is a simple step toward reducing the toxins that our children breathe."

According to the ALA-NY's State of the Air report issued last week, the failing grade for New York City was for having poor air quality, as determined by levels of ozone, short-term particulate pollution, and long-term particulate pollution. Given that approximately 171,000 children in the city suffer from asthma, improving air quality is a key step to protecting children's health and helping them reach their fullest potential.

"We congratulate Asthma Free School Zone for this model win nationwide to protect children from harmful exhaust fumes, including diesel," said **CLAIRE BARNETT, Founder and Executive Director of the Healthy Schools Network**. "This will have a major impact on improving air quality inside schools."

"As a new dad, I'm telling every parent I know to bike or walk their kids to school if they can. But if you're dropping off or picking up your child by car, turn that engine off for the sake of all our kids' health," said **PAUL STEELY WHITE, Executive Director of Transportation Alternatives**.

Councilmember **ROBERT JACKSON (D-MN), Chairperson of the City Council Education Committee** and lead sponsor of the new school zone idling law, stated, "High asthma rates from traffic pollution are a serious problem in my Council District because of the concentration of bus depots in Harlem plus the constant stream of cars and trucks crossing the George Washington Bridge. It is the young and the elderly who are most vulnerable but we all benefit from cleaner air."

New York State Senator **SHIRLEY HUNTLEY (D-BK)** stated, "On Asthma Awareness Day it is essential that we continue to raise awareness of the adverse impacts of engine idling on those suffering from the respiratory disease. Legislation such as the city's new School Zone Idling Law could prevent asthma attacks experienced by hundreds of students citywide."

New York State Senator **DAN SQUADRON (D-BK)** stated, "I have introduced a bill that would improve idling restriction all over New York State, helping to protect air quality for millions of New Yorkers. The City Council has led the way with this valuable legislation -- I now look forward to making sure the state legislature gets moving to improve idling laws all across New York."

The law, which goes into effect on Monday, May 11, 2009, will have far reaching environmental and public health benefits, as it does not just aim to reduce tailpipe emissions, but also includes measures to improve public awareness and behavior around schools, require police accounting of violations issued, and include "idling" in taxi and limousine driver training and licensing.

The new school zone Idling law reduces to one-minute the time allowed for drivers to keep their engines running while parked or standing adjacent to a school. The change is aimed at reducing the prevalence of childhood asthma in New York City, which according to the NYC Department of Health and Mental Hygiene is 9%--almost twice that of children nationwide (5%).

According to some sources, the asthma rate in certain areas of the Bronx, Brooklyn, and Manhattan is as high as 24%. At a cost of more than 14 million lost school days per year, this chronic respiratory illness is the #1 health-related reason for absenteeism nationwide.

Councilmember (CM) **INEZ DICKENS (D-MN)** stated, "Idling is harmful to our youth, our seniors. Moreover, idling endangers the health and welfare of all New Yorkers. Gas emissions exacerbate serious, respiratory health conditions such as asthma and emphysema. I am very concerned about these critical respiratory conditions as they affect my community, my children and my seniors."

CM **ALAN GERSON (D-MN)** stated, "Reducing idling is a win for the environment and an important step in the ongoing battle against asthma, which plagues our city and particularly our children."

CM **SARA GONZALEZ (D-BK)** stated, "Representing an area bordering the Gowanus Expressway that suffers from high asthma rates, the Idle-Free NYC campaign is incredibly important to my community and the health of my constituents. I look forward to the time when every day in New York is idle free and will continue to support efforts to make that a reality."

CM **LETITIA JAMES (D-BK)** stated, "The Idle-Free NYC Day and campaign is a step in the right direction to help protect school children against harmful, poor air quality, specifically exhaust fumes from idling cars. Given that Brooklyn has extremely high asthma rates, and the childhood asthma rate is nearly twice that in New York City compared to the national average, I'm extremely happy to see everyone here address this crisis."

CM **G. OLIVER KOPPELL (D-BX)** stated, "The reduction of diesel exhaust is critical for New York City. Idling engines are dangerous to public health, exacerbating asthma and respiratory disease, particularly in children, and contributing to global warming. The high incidence of asthma in New York City among young people and the need to reduce greenhouse gas emissions, require that we find ways to reduce diesel exhaust. Cutting back on idling is an important and inexpensive way to do this."

CM **ANNABEL PALMA (D-BX)** stated, "This legislation sends a clear message that our health and our environment are assets that need to be valued and protected. Intro. 631-A is especially important to the Bronx, where asthma rates are prevalent among school children and are the highest in New York State. I am extremely pleased that the Council has set a new standard of responsibility that will produce positive results."

CM **ROSIE MENDEZ (D-Manhattan)** stated, "In a city where asthma rates are as high 25% among children in many neighborhoods, it is reassuring that this is something very simple that can be done – just turn off your car motor! If all the taxis, buses, trucks and private cars would just stop idling we could all breathe a little easier."

CM **DAN GARODNICK (D-MN)** stated, "Our schools are ground zero in the fight to protect New Yorkers from the harmful effects of vehicle emissions. We are making important progress in improving our air quality and reducing one of the greatest challenges to a healthy childhood in NYC."

CM **KENDALL STEWART (D-BK)** stated, "Asthma is a disease that has affected many New Yorkers and it is important as legislators we bring awareness to the constituents as to the causes and elements that aggravates it."

CM **ELIZABETH CROWLEY (D-QN)** stated, "People all over the City are suffering from poor air quality. This law helps reduce pollution and I applaud my colleagues for making sure idling laws are well known and enforced."

ERNEST LOGAN, President of the Council of School Supervisors and Administrators, stated, "The education of New York City's children is a sacred trust that involves safeguarding their health and safety as well as providing them a strong education. You can't have one without the other. In New York City, and most urban centers, the disease of asthma is a serious menace to the health of our children, especially the poorest among them."

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