



# State of New Jersey

## DEPARTMENT OF ENVIRONMENTAL PROTECTION

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### Frequently Asked Questions About N.J.'s Idling Restrictions

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NOTE: This document is intended to answer commonly asked questions about N.J.'s idling restrictions, "Control and Prohibition of Air Pollution From Diesel-Powered Motor Vehicles", N.J.A.C. 7:27-14. For a full copy of the regulations, see [www.StopTheSoot.org](http://www.StopTheSoot.org).

#### 1. Am I allowed to idle my diesel truck while I'm sleeping in it?

Currently, idling is allowed for heating or air-conditioning a sleeper cab while the driver or another driver is sleeping or resting in the sleeper berth in a non-residential area. An enforcement officer may need to confirm that there is someone sleeping in the sleeper berth.

However, recently passed changes eliminate the exemption for most sleeper berth-equipped vehicles beginning on May 1, 2010. After that date, only those vehicles with sleeper berths that have a model year 2007 or newer engine, or have been retrofitted with a diesel particulate filter, will be allowed to idle past the three-minute limit.

Drivers and trucking companies are encouraged to use alternatives to engine idling for temperature control that will save fuel and maintenance costs such as alternate power units or plug-in power.

#### 2. How long am I allowed to idle to warm up my diesel engine?

When the ambient temperature is below 25 degrees Fahrenheit, a motor vehicle may idle for 15 consecutive minutes when the vehicle has been stopped for 3 or more hours. Otherwise, idling is limited to 3 minutes. However, most diesel engines take 3 minutes or less to warm up (consult the engine manufacturer's recommendations). Limiting idling will save fuel and money.

#### 3. Will I get a ticket for idling while I am waiting for passengers to board my bus?

Idling is allowed for no more than 15 consecutive minutes in a 60-minute period while passengers are actively loading and unloading buses only if the bus needs to run the heat or air-conditioner for passengers already on-board. However, buses cannot idle for extended periods of time while claiming to be waiting for passengers, such as a tour bus on a layover waiting for the group to return.

#### 4. Are school buses subject to the 3 minute idling limit?

Yes, except for when they are sitting in traffic or loading or unloading passengers. However, school districts are encouraged to sign a No Idling Pledge, in which they agree to implement practices to eliminate or reduce idling (see [www.StopTheSoot.org](http://www.StopTheSoot.org)). Because children are especially vulnerable to the effects of diesel exhaust, drivers should turn off engines even when loading and unloading students. Diesel exhaust from queuing school buses often enters a school's ventilation system where the entire school population is exposed.

#### 5. Are there exceptions to allow idling for more than 3 minutes?

Yes. Diesel vehicles whose primary power source (engine) is necessary for operation of mechanical devices such as refrigerated trailers commonly called reefers, hydraulic lift gate pumps, air leveling equipment, cherry-pickers, etc. Some turbo-diesel engines, especially newer models, require approximately 3 to 5 minutes of idling to cool down

the engine and avoid damage. These vehicles will be allowed to idle for a length of time necessary for cooling as determined by the engine manufacturer and set with automatic timers.

In addition to these situations, armored trucks are exempt from idling requirements for several reasons. In order to assure the security of the cargo and drivers, these vehicles' engines must be on at all times. The windows of armored vehicles cannot be rolled down, which results in temperatures inside the vehicle that can be harmful to occupants. Most armored vehicle companies require that one person be in these vehicles at all times and this passenger would be exposed to dangerous temperatures.

Vehicles that are transporting live animals that need to be temperature controlled would be exempt from the 3 minute idling requirement.

Vehicles that serve as portable service operations, where customers enter the vehicles to receive services or make purchases, are exempt from the 3 minute idling requirement only if the engine must be on to provide electricity, air conditioning or heat to the service portion of the vehicle. This would include vehicles like libraries on wheels, bloodmobiles and Snap-On Tools trucks.

#### **6. Does idling my asphalt truck to warm the asphalt qualify for the exemption at 14.3(b)2?**

The exemption located at N.J.A.C. 7:27-14.3(b)2 is applicable only to those vehicles whose primary diesel engine is used for operations, other than propulsion, passenger compartment heating and passenger compartment air conditioning, that are specifically designed by the truck manufacturer. Asphalt trucks are designed to have a separate power source that provides the heat necessary to treat the asphalt, so asphalt trucks that use exhaust gas to "warm" the asphalt in the bed of the truck do not qualify for this exemption.

#### **7. Am I allowed to idle while my diesel vehicle is being repaired?**

Yes, as long as someone is actively working on the vehicle and the vehicle needs to be running to ensure effective diagnosis and repair.

#### **8. If my vehicle is waiting to be inspected, am I allowed to idle?**

Yes, vehicles can idle while being inspected or waiting to be inspected by a State or Federal motor vehicle inspector when the vehicle needs to be running to ensure effective diagnosis and repair. However, if you are waiting in line, shutting off the engine will save fuel and money as well as benefit the environment.

#### **9. Are Alternate Power Units (APUs) subject to idling regulations?**

APUs are devices attached to diesel vehicles that can power the vehicle's heating and air conditioning systems without the need to have the engine turned on. These devices allow truck drivers to sleep comfortably without the noise, smell and health effects of diesel exhaust. In addition, APUs are cost-effective and often pay for themselves within a year or two of installation due to reduced fuel costs and less frequent maintenance. At the current time, APUs are not subject to idling restrictions. Information on APUs is available from USEPA at [www.epa.gov/otaq/smartway/idlingtechnologies.htm](http://www.epa.gov/otaq/smartway/idlingtechnologies.htm)

#### **10. What if my vehicle is stuck in traffic for more than 3 minutes?**

Motor vehicles stopped in traffic are exempt from the 3 minute idling limit. However, if the traffic is not moving, shutting off the engine will save fuel and money as well as benefit the environment.

#### **11. Are emergency vehicles allowed to idle?**

By their nature, emergency vehicles such as fire, police, ambulances or public utility trucks may need to keep engines running to operate emergency equipment when they are engaged in the process of performing emergency services. They are exempt from idling restrictions, but only when actively being used for emergency services.

**12. Are regular gasoline-powered vehicles subject to idling restrictions?**

Yes, gasoline-powered motor vehicles are subject to similar idling restrictions including a 3 minute limit on idling (see [N.J.A.C. 7:27-15](#)). However, diesel vehicles emit much more fine particulate matter, commonly called soot, than do gasoline-powered vehicles and they will continue to be the subject of increased enforcement oversight.

**13. Will DEP still enforce the 3 minute idling limit now that the sweep is over?**

These regulations have been in place since the mid-1980s and we will continue to enforce them as part of the Department's renewed emphasis on reducing fine particulate matter from diesel vehicles. Reducing idling also conserves fuel and reduces greenhouse gases.

**14. Who can enforce the regulations besides DEP?**

Nearly all local health departments have been delegated authority to enforce the Department's air regulations, which include the idling standards. In addition, the State and local police departments can enforce the standard on public roadways.

**15. Will reducing idling really make a significant difference in reducing soot?**

According to the EPA, the U.S. Department of Energy and other organizations, the average long-haul truck idles at least 1,830 hours per year, and, in the process, uses \$2,200 of unnecessary fuel and emits 17 tons of carbon dioxide, 10 pounds of fine particles and 615 pounds of nitrogen oxides every year. Reducing idling will lower maintenance costs on each vehicle, save fuel and protect public health and air quality.

**16. Wouldn't the continual shutting off and turning on of diesel engines actually damage the engine and emit more soot than idling?**

Idling an engine for more than about 10 seconds actually uses more fuel than if the engine had been turned off. It is more efficient to turn an engine off if it will be stopped for more than 10 seconds. Frequent restarts of an engine will not have a negative impact on engine components.

**17. Isn't it bad to drive a cold engine if it hasn't been warmed up?**

Electronically controlled engines need no more than about 30 seconds to warm up. Driving a vehicle cuts warm-up times in half. The best way to warm up an engine is by driving it, while avoiding rapid acceleration and high speeds for approximately the first four miles in cold weather.

**18. Whom should I contact with questions or complaints?**

**DEP 24-hour Hotline – for reporting suspected violations** (877) WARN DEP (877 927-6337)

DEP Diesel Risk Reduction Team (609) 292-7953 -- for general questions

Northern Field Office (973) 656-4444

for complaints in Bergen, Essex, Hudson, Hunterdon, Morris, Passaic, Somerset, Sussex and Warren counties

Central Field Office (609) 584-4100

for complaints in Mercer, Middlesex, Monmouth, Ocean and Union counties

Southern Field Office (856) 614-3601

for complaints in Atlantic, Burlington, Camden, Cape May, Cumberland, Gloucester and Salem counties