



Idling

Unnecessary or excessive idling of vehicles is expensive, harmful to our health, causes environmental damage, and gets you nowhere! Canadian motorists idle their vehicles an average of six to eight minutes a day. If every driver of a light duty vehicle reduced their idling by three minutes a day, collectively over the year, Canadians would save:

- 630 million litres of fuel
- over 1.4 million tonnes of greenhouse gas emissions
- \$630 million annually in fuel costs (assuming fuel costs are \$1.00/L)

Why is engine idling a health issue?

Pollution from the tailpipes of idling cars can irritate and damage lungs, leading to higher risks of asthma, cancer, and heart disease. To make matters worse, people often park and idle right where we breathe – along our sidewalks, schoolyards, playgrounds, hospitals, shops, businesses, and homes.

Why is engine idling an environmental issue?

An operating vehicle emits a variety of gases from its tailpipe into the atmosphere. Some emissions, principally carbon dioxide (CO₂), are classified as greenhouse gases (GHGs) because they increase the earth's natural "greenhouse effect," and in doing so are contributing to the changing of the world's climate. Other emissions, such as volatile organic compounds (VOCs), carbon monoxide (CO) and oxides of nitrogen (NOX) are known to contribute towards air pollution and smog.



Truth and consequences of engine idling:

- **Idling wastes fuel:** Three percent of Ontario's fuel is wasted by idling. An idling gas engine burns about 3.5 litres an hour. Ten seconds of idling uses more fuel than restarting the engine.
- **Idling wastes money:** \$1.8 million of fuel is idled away by Canadians every day.
- **Idling contributes to reduced air quality:** An idling engine produces twice as many exhaust emissions as an engine in motion, significantly contributing to local air pollution.
- **Idling contributes to global climate change:** Idling engines account for 8 million kilograms of greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions per day.
- **Idling is harmful to your engine:** An idling engine is not operating at its peak temperature, which means fuel combustion is incomplete. As a result, fuel residues can condense on cylinder walls, contaminate oil and damage engine components. Excessive idling can cause water to condense in the vehicle's exhaust, which can lead to corrosion and reduce the life of the exhaust system.

Five simple steps to reduce idling:

1. Reduce your warm-up idling.

Today's electronically controlled engines allow you to drive away after only 30 seconds to three minutes of idling, even on the coldest winter days. What's often forgotten is that idling warms only the engine – not the wheel bearings, steering, suspension, transmission and tires. These parts also need to be warmed up, and the only way to do that is to drive, moderately building up speed. Of course, make sure your windows are cleared and defrosted before driving away.

2. If you will be stopped for more than 60 seconds (except in traffic), turn off your engine.

Any more than ten seconds of idling uses more fuel than is required to restart the engine. However, the break-even time to offset any potential incremental maintenance costs to the starter or battery is under 60 seconds. So, as a guideline, if you're stopped for more than 60 seconds – except in traffic – turn off the engine.

3. Avoid using remote car starters.

These devices encourage you to start your vehicle before you're ready to leave, resulting in needless idling and wasted fuel. If you do use a remote starter, start your vehicle shortly before you are ready to drive away.

4. Consider a block heater.

In temperatures below 0°C, consider using a block heater to warm up the engine, coolant and oil before starting your vehicle. This will reduce engine wear, improve fuel efficiency and reduce your vehicle emissions. Use an automatic timer to turn on the block heater no more than two hours before you plan to drive.

5. Leave the vehicle at home, or park part way to your destination.

This is the healthiest choice, for you, your family, and the environment. Walk, cycle, car pool or take public transit whenever you can.



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