



THE COMMONWEALTH OF MASSACHUSETTS
OFFICE OF THE ATTORNEY GENERAL

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September 8, 2021

BY ELECTRONIC MAIL

Superintendent Teresa Murphy
Mansfield Public Schools
2 Park Row
Mansfield, MA 02048
teresa.murphy@mansfieldschools.com

Re: Preventing Unnecessary School Bus Idling

Dear Superintendent Murphy:

As the school year begins and public health concerns continue, our office is reaching out to all school superintendents to provide information to help tackle the problem of illegal idling of school buses.

Diesel exhaust from idling school buses contributes to air pollution that can cause serious respiratory illnesses and other harmful diseases. This type of air pollution is especially harmful to children, whose lungs are not yet fully developed, and disproportionately impacts environmental justice communities that are already overburdened with environmental harms. Limiting or — even better — *eliminating* unnecessary bus idling time during loading and unloading of children can dramatically reduce these pollutants and improve our children's health.

As you know, the bus companies that service your schools are required to comply with the Massachusetts' anti-idling laws and regulations. Specifically, buses may not unnecessarily idle for longer than 5 minutes and within 100 feet of school grounds, except during very cold or hot weather and where the layout of school grounds necessitates active, sequential loading of students.

To help in this effort, the Attorney General's Office has created an online [illegal idling tip form](#) for reporting incidents of suspected illegal idling that may warrant further investigation. You and your school administrators can provide this link to school personnel, parents, and other community members to encourage them to report potential illegal idling to our office.

Additionally, here are some suggested actions your area schools can take to help reduce illegal idling and improve the air that our students breathe:

- Contact the transportation providers for your school, ask them to provide you with a copy of their anti-idling policies, and monitor their compliance with those policies. If they do not have an anti-idling policy, insist that they establish one.
- Limit students' outdoor waiting time during drop off and pickup.
- Provide information to parents about the anti-idling laws and regulations in school newsletters.
- Provide this information to teachers who often assist with school bus drop off and pickup, too.
- Ask all bus companies to install dashboard stickers on their fleet of buses and street signage near idling hot-spots around your school reminding them to turn off their engines.

More information regarding the Massachusetts [Clean Air Act](#), [Anti-Idling Law](#), [Anti-Idling Regulations](#), and [School Grounds Idling Regulations](#) can be found online. Additional information and resources about the health risks associated with, and measures to prevent, unnecessary idling—including example anti-idling signs—are also available through the [Massachusetts Department of Environmental Protection](#) and the [United States Environmental Protection Agency](#).

We recognize your schools have a lot to focus on during this new school year, and we want to thank you for all that you do to protect the health and safety of our students. If you have any questions, please feel free to reach out to me at betsy.harper@mass.gov or 617-963-2426.

Sincerely,



Betsy Harper
Chief, Environmental Protection Division