

[Our Vision](#) [Idling in the U.S.](#) [About Idling](#) [Programs](#) [In The News](#) [FAQ](#)

## About Idling

### Idling Myths & Facts

**Myth 1: The engine should be warmed up before driving.** True, the engine must be warmed up, but idling is not an effective way to warm up your vehicle, even in cold weather. The best way to do this is by driving the vehicle. With today's modern engines, and the advent of electronic engines, you need no more than about 30 seconds of idling before driving away, even on the coldest winter days. Driving a vehicle cuts warm-up times in half. This reduces fuel consumption and greenhouse gas emissions. Every 30 minutes of idling costs you at least 2/10 (0.2) of a gallon of gas - and up about 7/10 (0.7) of a gallon for an 8-cylinder engine. Keep in mind that every gallon of gas you use you also produce about 19 pounds of carbon dioxide.

The catalytic converter - the device that cleans pollutants from the vehicle exhaust - does not function at its peak until it reaches between 750° and 1500°F. The best way to warm the converter is to drive the vehicle. Idling emits more pollution if the catalytic converter is not working properly.

In winter conditions, emissions from idling vehicles are more than double the normal level immediately after a cold start. Warming up the engine means more than just the engine. The tires, transmission, wheel bearings and other moving parts also need to warm for the vehicle to perform well. Most of these parts do not warm until the vehicle is driven.

It's important to drive away as soon as possible after a cold start just avoid high speeds and rapid acceleration for the first 3-5 miles. This lets the whole vehicle reach peak operating temperature as quickly as possible without paying a fuel penalty.

If your vehicle has a diesel engine, idling actually lowers the coolant temperature faster than shutting off the engine. In other words, switching off the engine keeps the engine warm longer.

**Myth 2: Idling is good for your engine.** Excessive idling can actually damage your engine components, including cylinders, spark plugs, and exhaust systems. An idling engine is not operating at its peak temperature, which means that fuel does not undergo complete combustion. This leaves fuel residue that can condense on cylinder walls, where they can contaminate the oil and damage parts of the engine. For example, fuel residues are often deposited on spark plugs. As you spend more time idling, the average temperature of the spark plug drops. This makes the plug get dirty more quickly, which increases fuel consumption by 4 to 5 %. Excessive idling also lets water condense in the vehicle's exhaust, leading to corrosion and a reduction of the life of your exhaust system.

When not actively driving, people tend to idle their cars largely for one of two reasons: either to warm up the engine before driving or to avoid wear and tear on the engine in situations that require frequent restarting, such as drive-through service lines, rail crossings, car wash lines, carpool lines, and departure from concerts and sporting events, or while talking to friends or using the cell phone. By understanding the effects of idling and reducing

**Fact: Idling adds to global warming.** Climate change is a serious threat to the planet caused mainly by burning fossil fuels such as gasoline. Overwhelming scientific evidence links global warming to the highest ever average annual temperature, melting polar ice caps, rising sea levels, increasingly severe weather events, and the threat of many plant and animal species.

**Fact: Idling does affect the environment.** A gallon of gas you use produces about 19 pounds of carbon dioxide.

**Fact: Idling contributes to respiratory problems.** Today's modern vehicles contain Carbon Monoxide, Sulfur Dioxide, Benzene and several other pollutants that can harm your lungs and heart. Prolonged exposure can be especially harmful to the elderly, and individuals with asthma and other respiratory conditions.

**Fact: Idling can harm our health.** Air pollution because they breathe faster and deeper per pound of body weight. Many people get sick from air pollution if they remain inside a car. A report by the International Center for Transportation (ICT) found that exposure to most auto pollutants (VOCs) and carbon monoxide inside vehicles is higher than at the road side. VOC health problems -- like respiratory infections -- shorten life. The highest exposure occurs in traffic congestion on highways or in a line-up at a drive-through. Idling is linked to increased lung disease and cancer.

**Fact: Idling wastes fuel.** In this time of economic hardship, needless idling burns your hard earned money. And remember that fossil fuels are being depleted in the face of ever increasing demand.

- Idling your vehicle for more than just 10 minutes wastes fuel and restarts your engine.

- Idling your vehicle for just 10 minutes wastes fuel to travel 5 miles.

- Idling your vehicle for 10 minutes a day wastes fuel a year.

**Fact: Idling wastes money & natural resources.** Idling can use more fuel than turning on the engine.