

# THE SAFETY ZONE



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SCHOOL TRANSPORTATION SAFETY NEWSLETTER

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## Change of Seasons

Whether you live in Florida or New York, we all notice a change in the season. Daylight Savings Time, cooler temperatures, and the upcoming holiday seasons can affect our ability to stay alert and be safe.

This time of year we lose daylight. Some of us will go to work in the dark and come home in the dark. It can be difficult to see when driving in the dark, or backing out of a parking spot. Even driving through a parking lot becomes more dangerous.

It is important to make sure we are seen, and at the same time, we see others. When moving any vehicle, especially in the dark, always look for pedestrians in your neighborhood or in a parking lot. Remember to take a moment and clean your headlights.

Cooler temperatures can create thin sheets of ice making stairs, sidewalks and parking lots slippery. Wear proper footwear and use caution. Hold a handrail when available. Dress in layers for comfort and carry

sunglasses, gloves, and a hat with you. This time of year the weather can go from gray clouds to sunshine and from rain to snow within the hour!

With the upcoming holidays it's easy to get distracted, especially while driving. We may think about what we are making for dinner, shopping for gifts, or travel plans. Many of us are good at multi-tasking but doing it while driving is dangerous!

Cell phones are a great way to stay in communication with others but many of us have professions where using a cell phone is not safe. For example, would you want a doctor operating on you while they were talking with someone on a hands free device about their upcoming vacation? Of course not, you would want them focused on you!

Remember safety doesn't take a holiday. Being aware of your surroundings is important no matter what time of day it is. Weather can have an impact on our safety and being prepared can help us to protect ourselves and others. Have a safe day!

## Reduce Idling & Protect the Health of Others

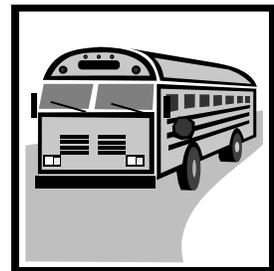
With colder weather comes the need to "warm-up" our vehicles. For safety reasons we need to defrost our windshields and make sure we are warm enough to operate the vehicle. But for those of us who drive diesel vehicles we need to limit our idling time.

According to The American Cancer Society diesel exhaust not only

contains cancer causing substances but it also contributes to other health problems such as lung and heart diseases.

The Occupational Safety and Health Administration (OSHA) reports, "Workers exposed to diesel exhaust face the risk of health effects ranging from irritation of the eyes and nose,

headaches and nausea, to respiratory disease and lung cancer."



# School Bus Idling Myths vs. Facts

Below are some common idling myths from The New York State Education Department for Pupil Transportation:

**Myth #1:** Warm your bus up for 20-30 minutes before you start your route in the morning, so the engine will reach running temperature before you leave the yard.

- **Idling Fact:** Modern diesel engines don't reach running temperature until they're driven on the road.

**Myth #2:** Idling longer than 5 minutes before starting on your route is better for the engine.

- **Idling Fact:** Excessive idling increases engine wear and wastes fuel.

**Myth #3:** Don't shut your bus off during athletic events or field trips far from home, in case it won't start.

- **Idling Fact:** A well-maintained modern bus will start every time – if a bus doesn't start every time, it should be repaired.



**Myth #4:** Idling is necessary to keep the cabin comfortable for the kids.

- **Idling Fact:** There are auxiliary heaters that can be purchased to heat up the bus. Idling is not an efficient way to heat the cabin. Routes should be planned to spend less time waiting.

**Myth #5:** There's no way to avoid exposure to diesel exhaust when our buses line up in the school loop for afternoon dismissal.

- **Idling Fact:** There's no need for bus drivers to line up so early in the school loop, or to leave their engines running while waiting for afternoon dismissal to begin.

New York State Environmental Conservation Law (ECL) prohibits heavy duty vehicles, including diesel trucks and buses, from idling for more than five minutes at a time. Exceptions include a vehicle stuck in traffic, idling for maintenance purposes or to power an auxiliary function or apparatus of a vehicle (such as a tow truck or concrete tumbler), vehicles involved in an emergency situation (ex. wheelchair lifts) and to maintain appropriate temperature for passenger comfort.

The bottom line is nothing is more important than your health and the health & safety of others. Next time you find yourself in an idling situation, ask yourself, "is idling this vehicle harming others or can I just turn it off?"

**THINK SAFE. ACT SAFE. BE SAFE.**

