

Vehicle Engine Idling: Fact and Myth

MYTH: *Pollution emitted from idling vehicles is an insignificant problem for my health and the environment.*

FACT: Actually, it's very significant. One minute of idling produces more carbon monoxide than the smoke from three packs of cigarettes. The toxic air pollutants (especially Nitric Oxide and particulates) emitted from idling can impair our lungs and heart, and **exhaust fumes have been linked to asthma, decreased lung function, cardiac disease, cancer, brain development and function. Children, the elderly and people with respiratory ailments are especially at risk. And remember, babies in buggies are at exhaust level!** Idling, just one car for five minutes per day can emit as much as 11Kg of harmful air pollutants and 118Kg of carbon dioxide a year, the primary greenhouse gas, while wasting gallons of fuel.

MYTH: *Idling is good for my engine.*

FACT: 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 deposit on spark plugs and increase fuel consumption by up to 5%. Also, water condensation in the exhaust system can reduce the system's life.

MYTH: *Eliminating unnecessary idling won't save me money.*

FACT: One hour of idling can burn up to one gallon of fuel. Most drivers end up wasting 1-2 tanks of fuel per year due to idling. Avoiding five minutes of idling each day can save £28-92 every year, depending on the size of your petrol tank. When you idle, you get 0 miles per gallon. Talk about money going up in smoke!

MYTH: *It wastes more fuel to restart my vehicle than it does to leave it idling.*

FACT: For cars with fuel injection (which includes almost all vehicles built since the late 1980s), idling for even 10 seconds uses more fuel than restarting the engine. In fact, car manufacturers recommend that drivers "turn the engine off when stopped for more than 30 seconds to save fuel and reduce exhaust emission." Of course, it's not advised to turn off your engine while waiting in normal traffic. That's not safe!

MYTH: *Shutting off and restarting my vehicle is hard on the engine.*

FACT: Frequent restarting has little impact on components that include the battery and starter motor. Component wear caused by restarting the engine is estimated to add £8 per year to the cost of driving, money likely to be saved many times over due to fuel savings from less idling.

MYTH: *I need to warm up my car for several minutes in the winter.*

FACT: Idling is not an effective way to warm up your vehicle. Modern engines only need to warm up for 30 seconds on cold days. Idling is a slow and ineffective way to warm up your engine. Furthermore, idling your car for several minutes before driving creates extra air pollution, since your car's catalytic converter is not effective at reducing the pollution in your car's exhaust until it is sufficiently hot— generally only after driving a few minutes. The best approach is to only idle for 30 seconds, and then just drive gently for the first few miles. And whatever you do, don't leave your car running unattended - it's an offence!

When you stop, turn your Engine Off!