

**TO:** All School Bus Drivers

**FROM:** \_\_\_\_\_

**DATE:** \_\_\_\_\_

**SUBJECT:** Elimination of Unnecessary School Bus Idling

Georgia school bus drivers safely transport over one million passengers each morning and again each afternoon. We now know that your action regarding the elimination of unnecessary idling of your school bus is another important safety sensitive function of your job. Implementation of the following guidelines is an easy way to protect your health, the health of student riders and the possible health of children and teachers inside schools. Additionally, an elimination of unnecessary idling saves money by reducing fuel consumption, reducing wear and tear on engines and improving air quality.

**You will find attached important school bus idling guidelines provided by the Georgia Department of Education Pupil Transportation Division. These guidelines are being implemented immediately as our Operational/Departmental Procedures on idling of our school buses. Please note that the guidelines include necessary exceptions to accommodate special operational issues.**

Please ask any necessary questions so that you have a full understanding of what is expected. Your cooperation and compliance is both expected and appreciated.

March 7, 2009

# Guidelines for the Elimination of Unnecessary School Bus Idling

## ACTIONS TO ELIMINATE UNNECESSARY IDLING

1. **Morning Delivery** in school loading/unloading zones – **NO IDLING ZONE**
  - a. Drivers should cut off engine as ASAP
    - i. Lift bus drivers may need to leave the engine running if loading or unloading a wheel chair
    - ii. Special needs bus drivers may need to idle for heat or air conditioning to accommodate a medically fragile student
  - b. Driver should not start engine again until a check for students and belongings is completed and driver is ready and it is clear to depart (keep radio on for communication)
  
2. **Afternoon Pick-Up** in school loading/unloading zones – **NO IDLING ZONE**
  - a. Drivers should cut off engine as ASAP (keep radio on for communication)
    - i. If this is driver's 2<sup>nd</sup> load then be sure to check for students and belongings upon arrival
  - b. If the school is designed for angle parking, then utilization in the afternoon will place the exhaust further away from student walk paths and the school
  - c. In cold weather the school may permit drivers to enter the school and go to a designated location to stay warm
    - i. Remember to respect the educational environment
  - d. OR in cold weather drivers may congregate on one bus (for health and safety) and keep only one engine running while waiting for P.M. dismissal
    - i. If drivers gather on one bus be sure the bus is well away from the school and any school building air intakes
  - e. Drivers **MUST** ensure that they are back on their bus prior to dismissal
  - f. Driver should not start engine again until driver is ready and it is clear to depart
  
3. **Field & Athletic Trip** destinations – **NO IDLING ZONE**
  - a. Drivers should not idle while waiting for students during field or athletic trips
    - i. Exception would be for driver/student health and safety under extreme temperature conditions (see #5, "Exceptions", item "c")
      1. Minimize idling under these conditions and move the bus to a position well away from the school/building where possible
        - a. When idling is required to warm or cool the bus if the driver is required to stay with the bus for security reasons
        - b. When idling is required to warm or cool the bus prior to departure

#### 4. Pre-Trip Inspection

- a. Drivers should keep idling to a minimum
  - i. Limit to the time required for inspecting the bus and the equipment on the bus
    - 1. No more than 8 to 10 minutes (see #5, "Exceptions", item "c")
  - ii. Drivers should not routinely start and unnecessarily leave the bus running

#### 5. **Exceptions** – Provided all reasonable steps are taken to minimize idling, the following exceptions apply:

- a. Idling is sometimes required in freezing weather
  - i. For deicing the windshield
  - ii. Or to thaw air brake lines
- b. Idling may be necessary for passenger and driver health and safety
  - i. If the outside temperature is 32 degrees Fahrenheit or below, then idling MAY be required for adequate heat
  - ii. If the outside temperature is 75 degrees Fahrenheit or more, and the climate inside the bus is unsafe, then idling COULD be required for adequate cooling (not to be abused).
    - 1. BUT the lowering of windows and other measures to **minimize** or **eliminate** idling at these warm weather temperatures is highly desired (preferred method)
  - iii. Recommend that idling take place outside the school zone in the afternoon (where possible) if there is a requirement to maintain a safe and healthy temperature
    - 1. In this case you would enter the school zone just prior to dismissal and shut off the engine
- c. Extended idling may also be required for cold weather fleet start-up
  - i. If the outside temperature is 20 Fahrenheit degrees or below

Georgia's 18,000 school bus driver's actions to eliminate unnecessary idling can make a significant impact. Collectively, they can make a huge difference in creating a healthier and cleaner environment and in protecting THEIR health and the health of THEIR STUDENTS.

**Remember – under all conditions, including the exceptions noted, eliminate any unnecessary idling.**