

VEHICLE IDLING REQUIREMENTS & BEST PRACTICES

Excessive idling unnecessarily releases air contaminants and contributes to ground-level ozone and particulate pollution. NJDEP states these pollutants can cause asthma attacks, wheezing, coughing, lung cancer, and premature death. Reducing idling saves fuel, lowers maintenance costs, protects public health and air quality, and reduces greenhouse gases.

Requirements

NJDEP regulations state that diesel- and gasoline-powered motor vehicles may not idle for more than 3 minutes unless a specified exception applies.

Exceptions

- Active emergency services, including active snow removal, only while actively performing the service.
- The primary engine is actually needed for a necessary and prescribed mechanical operation other than propulsion, such as a hydraulic lift, cherry picker, refrigeration unit for a perishable load, or similar equipment. “PTO/hydraulic” applies only to the designed operation.
- A motor vehicle is stopped in traffic.
- A state or federal motor-vehicle inspection, active repair, or effective diagnosis requires the engine to run.
- Qualifying parked diesel particulate-filter regeneration for certain model-year 2007 or later vehicles; the cab indicator must show regeneration.
- Operation of an auxiliary or alternate power system for cabin comfort. Use an APU or plug-in power instead of the main engine when available.
- Idling is permitted for no more than 15 minutes in a 60-minute period while passengers are actively boarding or discharging from a bus.
- Vehicles transporting medically needy passengers.

Cold-Weather Diesel Rule

Up to 15 consecutive minutes only when the diesel vehicle has been stopped for 3 or more hours AND the outside/ambient temperature is below 25°F. Otherwise, the 3-minute limit applies. 15 minutes is a maximum, not a target.

Supervisor Responsibilities

- Plan and stage work to minimize idling; model and reinforce engine-off practices.
- Confirm claimed exceptions, review required logs, investigate reports, preserve relevant records, and escalate uncertain questions to the agency Director/designee for NJDEP and municipal-counsel verification.
- Arrange coaching, retraining, or corrective action under municipal procedures; Fleet should maintain manufacturer guidance and vehicle systems.

This resource is intended for general information purposes only. It should not be construed as legal advice or legal opinion regarding any specific or factual situation. Always follow your organization's policies and procedures as presented by your manager or supervisor. For further information regarding this resource, contact your Safety Director at 877.398.3046. © All rights reserved.

Contractors & Vendors

Contractors, vendors, delivery personnel, and service providers on agency property must follow N.J.A.C. 7:27-14, N.J.A.C. 7:27-15, and municipal site rules. Agency contacts should communicate requirements before mobilization when practicable. Drivers must respond to shutdown requests and document claimed exceptions. Repeated or serious noncompliance may lead to available contractual remedies

Best Practices

- Prepare the vehicle, paperwork, route, radio, devices, and attachments before startup; coordinate crews, fueling, loading, material pickup, and staging to reduce engine-on waiting.
- Turn off during non-exempt waiting, breaks, paperwork, and loading that does not need engine power. Use auxiliary power, plug-in power, approved block heaters, sheltered parking, or separate designed power when available and authorized.
- Use only the warm-up time reasonably needed. NJDEP states most diesel engines take 3 minutes or less; electronically controlled engines need no more than about 30 seconds. Driving cuts warm-up time in half; avoid rapid acceleration and high speeds for approximately the first 4 miles in cold weather.
- Coordinate plow/spreader staging so engines are not running before active service or after it ends. Log temperature, stop duration, and reason when supervision requires an exemption log.
- Follow manufacturer instructions for warm-up, turbo-diesel cool-down, parked regeneration, and specialized equipment. Do not defeat shutdown timers or emissions controls. Report vehicles that appear to idle excessively.

Complaints & Reporting

- Record date, time, location, vehicle/unit, observed duration, and circumstances; notify [Supervisor/Fleet Manager Name/Phone]. Determine whether an exception was active.
- NJDEP 24-hour Hotline: 1-877-WARN-DEP (1-877-927-6337)

State Penalties

$250 first offense; $500 second offense; $1,000 third and each subsequent offense, per violation. The registered vehicle owner and property owner where idling occurs may be subject to penalties.

Resources

- Vehicle Idling Reduction Model Policy is available on MSI Model Policies
- MSI Infographic: Vehicle Idling Drive Quick Guide on MSI Forms & Documents.