

Press release

2nd August 2021

Engines Off for outdoor worker health: campaign urges fleet operators to protect employee and public health

Idling Action's 'Engines Off' campaign, jointly led by Camden Council and the City of London Corporation, is making fresh calls for fleet operators and businesses operating in London to tackle air pollution caused by idling vehicle engines to protect their employees' and the public's health.

Idling Action works with organisations through this campaign to pledge a meaningful commitment to reduce air pollution from engine idling, to use free educational resources to engage drivers/ employees, to publicise their commitment and to demonstrate best practice to others.

The continuing Engines Off campaign focuses on the importance of businesses and organisations tackling air pollution from engine idling as a specific threat to the health of outdoor workers such as drivers themselves, in addition to the wider public. To this end, Idling Action has partnered with British Safety Council to highlight the importance of switching Engines Off to protect outdoor workers.

Idling exposes people to toxic engine emissions. These emissions are linked to chronic health conditions and 4,100 deaths in London each year¹. Tackling idling is an easy and effective way to improve local air quality and reduce the exposure of fleet drivers and outdoor workers to health-damaging air pollution.

Studies have shown that pollution levels are often highest inside vehicles². More widely, London's outdoor workers are routinely exposed to pollution levels above World Health Organization guidelines³. British Safety Council's [Time To Breathe campaign](#) highlights this link between occupational health and pollution exposure of outdoor workers. It encourages employers to help by implementing measures to reduce air pollution, including tackling engine idling. **Mike Robinson, Chief Executive at the British Safety Council, commented:**

¹ Environmental Research Group, Imperial College London 2019. London Health Burden of Current Air Pollution and Future Health Benefits of Mayoral Air Quality Policies.

http://erg.ic.ac.uk/research/home/resources/ERG_ImperialCollegeLondon_HIA_AQ_LDN_11012021.pdf

² <https://www.theguardian.com/environment/2017/jun/12/children-risk-air-pollution-cars-former-uk-chief-scientist-warns>

³ <https://www.britsafe.org/campaigns-policy/time-to-breathe-air-pollution-campaign/research-the-case-for-action/>

“Air pollution is the UK’s largest environmental health risk, greater than smoking and obesity, causing 40,000 deaths a year and costing the UK economy a staggering £20bn annually. Indeed, the links between air pollution and illness are increasing. We need concrete action to reduce air pollution and tackling engine idling is a vital part of that. We urge organisations whose operations involve fleets, professional drivers, or employees who travel by car to work in London, to educate and encourage their drivers to act on idling. This will help save lives and protect outdoor workers from toxic air.”

Air pollution is a particularly timely issue in London and the UK following the inquest into the tragic death of nine-year-old Ella Adoo-Kissi-Debrah, and emerging [links](#) between air pollution and COVID-19 mortality. Furthermore, as London continues to open up with the relaxation of Covid restrictions, more employees are heading back to work and businesses restart normal operations, so it is vital to focus on protecting employee health by limiting occupational exposure to air pollution.

One of the first businesses to take the Engines Off pledge was Marston Holdings, the UK’s largest provider of integrated transportation and enforcement services. **According to Nick Ruxton-Boyle, the company’s Director of Environment:** *“As part of our pledge, we have implemented an engine idling policy and educated colleagues on the importance of avoiding idling whilst commuting or operating vehicles on the company’s behalf. We are also supplying an increasing number of local authorities with both fully electric and low emission vehicles enabling them to demonstrate that they are serious about tackling air pollution and climate change.”*

Idling Action, funded through the Mayor’s Air Quality Fund, provides free resources and support to businesses across the UK. Businesses can download resources from the website www.idlingaction.london or email us at info@idlingaction.london for support. Idling Action London will be hosting a free webinar for businesses to find out more about the Engines Off campaign on 1st September at 16.00 - <https://www.eventbrite.co.uk/e/idling-action-london-fleet-and-business-engines-off-webinar-tickets-164819237777>

Councillor Adam Harrison, Cabinet Member for Improving Camden's Environment said:

“During the recent lockdown, lots of people realised the benefits of quieter, low-traffic streets in London. We continue to learn from this and go further in protecting people’s health by cutting air pollution.

“This starts with cutting out avoidable pollution from engine idling. We are therefore calling on individuals and businesses to continue to back our ‘Engines Off’ campaign and make a pledge to reduce emissions by avoiding engine idling wherever possible.”

Notes to editors

About the Idling Action project

- Idling Action London is a London-wide behaviour change campaign which is helping to reduce localised air pollution caused by motorists leaving their engines running when parked.
- The project has been awarded funding as part of the Mayor’s Air Quality Fund Round 3 and involves 30 London local authorities and the City of London Corporation.
- The Idling Action Project has been running since 2016. Now in its fourth phase it is jointly led by the City of London Corporation and the London Borough of Camden.
- The project offers virtual and in-person education and targeted behaviour change interventions for schools, businesses, local authorities, hospitals and other organisations.
- For more information, see our website www.idlingaction.london and follow us on twitter @idlingaction.

About the Engines Off campaign

- The campaign was first launched in August 2020.
- 10 businesses and 11 local authorities have already signed up and taken the Engines Off pledge. A further 25 businesses have utilised the free Engines Off resource toolkit.
- A free webinar will be held on 1st September at 16.00 for any fleet operator or business wanting to find out more about the campaign and how to tackle avoidable air pollution caused by idling vehicle engines. More details and to book tickets - <https://www.eventbrite.co.uk/e/idling-action-london-fleet-and-business-engines-off-webinar-tickets-164819237777>.

Benefits for businesses of tackling idling

Business case for avoiding idling:

- Fuel usage facts - the TRL study found that it can cost up to 3p for every minute spent idling. If that vehicle idled for 10 minutes per day, within 6 months that would equate to a cost of over £58.
- 2020 research from Transport Research Laboratory showed that idling for just 30 seconds produces twice as much pollution and wastes more fuel than switching off and restarting your engine.

Reputational reasons

- Our customers/residents/ the public are increasingly clued-up on air pollution issues and expect businesses and public service providers to take responsibility for the impact of their operations.
- There are also environmental benefits to avoiding idling – 1 minute of idling by a HGV can release up to 69g of CO₂. Further more, switching off and on again releases half the amount of CO₂ than idling.

Making an immediate difference

- Switching off creates an immediate benefit for air quality at a local level and helps reduce spikes in pollution concentrations.
- Low barriers to change: this campaign has a significant behaviour change impact and requires minimal resourcing and compliments existing schemes like FORS.
- This can supplement more ambitious targets that your business or organisation might have: It is a great interim measure before introducing more widespread measures to reduce fleet emissions as a critical step in tackling the air quality health crisis and the climate crisis.

About the City of London Corporation

- The City of London Corporation is the governing body of the Square Mile dedicated to a vibrant and thriving City, supporting a diverse and sustainable London within a globally-successful UK. www.cityoflondon.gov.uk

About Camden Council

- Camden has a proud, rebellious spirit that throughout its history has seen communities come together to tackle problems, and to bring about real social change.

About Mayor of London's Air Quality Fund

- The Mayor's Air Quality Fund (MAQF) is a £22 million fund over 10 years to support projects by London boroughs to improve air quality. Projects supported with £6m in the third round of the MAQF were [announced by the Mayor on 7 June 2019](#). In this round he is supporting four Low Emission Neighbourhoods and 11 other innovative air quality projects, including this idling project, a pan-London project tackling pollution from construction machinery, and an initiative supporting 250 car-free and pedestrianisation schemes across London.