



**SIERRA
CLUB**
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MASSACHUSETTS CHAPTER

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Making the Anti-Idling Laws Enforceable

Formal Title: An Act to Protect Air Quality and Conserve Natural Resources

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H907

While vehicle idling is addressed by MGL Ch. 90 Sec 16A, and 310 CMR Sec 7.11, the law is very rarely enforced. In order to enforce this, a police officer would need to be present and monitor an idling vehicle for five full minutes, and is thus not practical. However, five minutes is not only unenforceable, it's also far in excess of what is necessary in all but very few situations. 310 CMR, Sec 7.11 already itemizes these exceptions (lift gate trucks, ambulances, armored vehicles, etc.). The vast majority of current idling is done by those who are unaware of the law.

- Tests show that no more than 30 seconds of idling is needed to circulate the engine oil before you can drive on cold days. Anything more just wastes fuel and produces needless greenhouse gas emissions.
- Once an engine is at operating temperature, idling causes more pollution by running than by stopping and starting up again.
- Studies indicate that the trade-off for light- and medium-duty gasoline powered vehicles is about 10 seconds (i.e. the vehicle will produce more pollution idling longer than 10 seconds than it will by shutting down and restarting the engine).
- The time trade-off on medium- and heavy-duty diesel engines is about 30 seconds.
- Idling will not allow the catalytic converter to reach optimum temperature. A catalytic converter doesn't function at its peak until it reaches between 400°C and 800°C. The best way to warm the engine and all other components is to drive the vehicle.
- Idling can damage a car's engine. Because the engine isn't working at its peak operating temperature when it's idling, the fuel doesn't undergo complete combustion. This leaves fuel residues that can contaminate engine oil and damage engine parts. Fuel residues tend to deposit on spark plugs. As the amount of engine idling increases, the plugs' average temperature drops, and they get dirty more quickly. This, in turn, can increase fuel consumption by four to five percent. Excessive idling can also let water condense in the vehicle's exhaust, leading to corrosion and reduction of the life of the exhaust system.