

IDLE REDUCTION

Myths and Facts About Idling

Gasoline Vehicles

Myth 1: Idling is an effective way to warm up a vehicle and reduce damage to the engine.

Fact 1: Idling is NOT effective at warming up an engine and may not bring the engine to proper operating temperature. Cold engines require more fuel for proper combustion. This excess fuel washes cylinder walls of oil, leading to premature damage. Driving warms the engine and oil quicker while reducing excess fuel needs and wear.

Myth 2: Idling for several minutes is the only way to safely coat the engine in oil.

Fact 2: You only need 30 seconds to circulate the oil in your engine, even on cold days. The rest of the vehicle will only warm up through use, preferably gentle driving, until all other moving parts are up to operating temperature.

Myth 3: Idling uses less fuel than stopping and starting.

Fact 3: Idling for as little as 10 seconds uses more fuel than restarting your vehicle. Even if wear on the battery and starter is included, 30 seconds of idling costs more than switching off and on.

Myth 4: Idling is necessary for engines.

Fact 4: Idling causes buildup of carbon soot on engine components. Sulfuric acid is also produced that corrodes the metals and gaskets.

Diesel Vehicles

Myth 1: Idling doesn't waste/pollute much.

Fact 1: Idling for one hour burns an entire gallon or more in a heavy-duty diesel vehicle. That's money out the exhaust pipe.

Myth 2: Idling is an effective way to warm up a vehicle and reduce damage to the engine.

Fact 2: Diesel manufacturers recommend warming up for only 3 – 5 minutes, even in cold temperatures. Idling for longer can lead to carbon soot buildup or damage from sulfuric acid on engine components. Idling can be further reduced by using a block heater to heat your engine much faster and using thinner weight oils in cold seasons.

Myth 3: Diesels need to idle in cold weather to avoid difficult restarts due to gelling.

Fact 3: Diesel fuel has additives designed to prevent gelling during colder months. Additionally, modern diesel engines have technologies built in to prevent gelling in the fuel tank.

Myth 4: Diesels need to idle at cooldown to prevent damage.

Fact 4: Diesels only need a cooldown period if they have been under extended high power conditions. Even then, most cooldowns take less than 1 minute to cool the turbo sufficiently. If it is a very hot day, the maximum time needed is 3 – 5 minutes.

Source: Oak Ridge National Laboratory, <https://sustainability-ornl.org/documents/ORNL%20Idle%20Reduction%20Guide.pdf>

Remember: Idling gives you 0 mpg.