



# IDAHO COMMUNITIES ENVIRONMENTAL NEWS

A publication of the Idaho Department of Environmental Quality

Issue 2

## REDUCE VEHICLE IDLING TO SAVE FUEL AND MONEY AND PROTECT AIR QUALITY

Does your city or county government have a vehicle fleet? If so, do drivers sometimes let their engines idle for several minutes to warm up? Do they leave vehicles running while loading or unloading or conducting official business? Do citizens frequently idle for 10 or more seconds while parked in city or county parking lots, at parks, or other municipal facilities?

If you answered yes to any of these questions, your city or county may be able to save fuel and money while protecting air quality by joining the *Clean Air Zone Idaho* program, which is aimed at encouraging drivers to turn off their engines while parked or sitting still (not in traffic).

Idling vehicles have both economic and environmental impacts. When a car or truck is left running while it's parked or sitting still, fuel and money are wasted. Although fuel prices have dropped lately, they still consume a large bite of our personal and municipal budgets. Idling vehicles also produce emissions, which contribute to air pollution and global climate change, are harmful to public health, and can damage vehicle engines.



### Origins of the Clean Air Zone Idaho Program

The *Clean Air Zone Idaho* program was initiated by the Idaho Department of Environmental Quality (DEQ) in 2004 with a campaign aimed at encouraging school bus drivers and others to avoid idling on school grounds. To date, nearly 300 Idaho schools and child-care facilities have voluntarily joined the program. (Visit DEQ's Web site at [www.deq.idaho.gov/air/assist\\_citizen\\_comm/clean\\_air\\_zone\\_idaho/caz\\_members.cfm](http://www.deq.idaho.gov/air/assist_citizen_comm/clean_air_zone_idaho/caz_members.cfm) to find out which schools in your area are participating.)

The program has since expanded to include communities and businesses where vehicle idling is common. Community facilities include parking lots at municipal buildings, airports, libraries, parks, sports areas, and universities. Businesses with delivery vans or truck fleets, loading docks, drive-through lanes, or parking lots where vendors or customers often sit and idle are also encouraged to participate in the program.



### How Local Governments Can Participate

Participation in the *Clean Air Zone Idaho* program is voluntary and free. Participants receive free resources and recognition. It's easy to join. Simply contact Loni Hanka at DEQ toll-free at 1-866-790-IDEQ (4337) or [loni.hanka@deq.idaho.gov](mailto:loni.hanka@deq.idaho.gov).

Here are some things you can do to encourage your employees and citizens to turn off their engines:

- Adopt a no-idling policy and direct drivers of municipal vehicles to turn off their engines while loading, unloading, and parked. DEQ can provide you with suggested text and an easy-to-implement communications plan.
- Establish a clean air zone at city buildings and facilities, where idling is discouraged or not allowed.
- Post "Turn off your engine" signs in clean air zones to remind citizens and employees not to idle vehicles. DEQ can provide you with bright outdoor metal signs that will capture drivers' attention.
- Publicize your participation in the program as part of ongoing marketing.
- Consider purchasing fuel-efficient and hybrid vehicles for your fleet.
- Encourage area businesses to create no-idle zones at delivery areas, drop-off zones, and drive-through windows with typical wait times of over 10 seconds.



## PHARMACEUTICALS AND THE ENVIRONMENT

As part of DEQ's 2009-2013 Strategic Plan, the department has committed to assembling a coalition of government and non-profit groups throughout the state to develop a means to collect unwanted household pharmaceuticals from the public and dispose of them safely. In September 2008, DEQ hosted a pharmaceutical waste and disposal workshop that drew nearly 50 participants, including representatives of the Idaho Board of Pharmacy, Drug-Free Idaho, Boise State University, and various local governments. Follow-up meetings have begun to explore potential legislative or regulatory changes needed, funding options, and public education and outreach efforts.



Take-back programs have become common throughout Europe and Canada for a wide range of products including pharmaceuticals, automotive fluids, batteries, electronics, paint, solvents and tires. Such programs are becoming more commonplace in the U.S. as well. Some states have already implemented take-back programs for pharmaceuticals. California, New York, and Michigan are among states that offer prescription take-back programs for residents in some areas. In some cases, the programs offer periodic one-day drop-off collection programs, while others provide ongoing collection at permanent locations.

In the Pacific Northwest, Washington is conducting a pilot take-back program—the Unwanted Medicine Return Program. As of November 2008, over 15,000 pounds of unwanted medicines had been collected and safely disposed of. Oregon is also exploring implementing a pharmaceutical take-back program.

Communities that would be interested in participating in the coalition to explore pharmaceutical take-back in Idaho or would like to pilot a take-back program may contact Lisa Kramer at 1-866-790-IDEQ (4337).

## INFRASTRUCTURE FINANCING FOR DRINKING WATER AND WASTEWATER SYSTEMS

Every four years the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency surveys the nation's drinking water and wastewater infrastructure. Recent results show that the infrastructure needs of Idaho's municipalities total over \$1.3 billion. DEQ manages a loan program (State Revolving Loan Fund, the "SRF") that provides low-interest, long-term loans to help meet these needs.

DEQ's standard interest rate for state fiscal year 2009 is 3.25% for both drinking water and wastewater loans. Under certain circumstances, the loan interest rate may even be reduced. DEQ loan capacity for state fiscal year 2009 is up to \$40.5 million for wastewater systems and \$18 million for drinking water facilities.

Primary recipients of SRF loans are municipalities; however, drinking water loans have also been made to homeowners' associations and to private water companies. The SRF program has provided money for many systems in Idaho, from Atomic City (population 25) in Bingham County to the city of Boise, which serves over 100,000 people.



For more information about this program, contact:

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*Printed on recycled paper. November 2008. Costs associated with this publication are available from the Department of Environmental Quality in accordance with Section 60-202, Idaho Code.*

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Permit #1  
Boise, ID

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Boise, ID 83706