



Green News for Schools

Idaho Department of Environmental Quality

January 2009

Get In the Zone!

Clean Air Zone, Idaho's voluntary program to reduce children's exposure to diesel/vehicle exhaust through anti-idling programs, alternative fuels, and cleaner technologies for school buses, is in its fifth year, and more schools than ever are getting "in the zone." More than 300 schools and child care facilities have signed up to participate in the program. As a result, students across Idaho are breathing cleaner air.

By minimizing idling on school grounds, schools reduce the amount of pollutants students breathe, as they are exposed to less exhaust from idling vehicles. Not idling also saves gas and money. If a car will be idling for more than 10 seconds, it is more efficient to turn it off and restart when it is time to leave than to idle.

If your school has not joined *Clean Air Zone*, you still can! As a member of the *Clean Air Zone*, your school will receive free street signs, a toolkit with information you can pass along to parents, air quality lesson plans, and *The Magic School Bus Gets Cleaned Up* book for your school.

Districts that join are also eligible for grants to retrofit old diesel school buses with cleaner-burning technologies.

Visit www.deq.idaho.gov/air/educ_tools/clean_air_zone_idaho/index.cfm to learn more about the program. To sign up, contact Joanna Pierce at (208) 373-0146 or joanna.pierce@deq.idaho.gov.

Grant Money Available for Clean Air Zone Sign Installation



If your school is already a member of *Clean Air Zone*, but you have not been able to install your signs, DEQ can help! Funds are available to assist schools in implementing *Clean Air Zone* by hiring a contractor to install the signs. All materials will be supplied, and there is no cost to schools. Schools will be able to work with the contractor to ensure the signs are placed in appropriate locations.

DEQ is compiling a list of schools and child care facilities that are interested in this assistance. Once the list is compiled, DEQ will hire a contractor to install the signs.

If you are interested in assistance with installing your "Turn off your engine" signs, contact Mike Edwards at 208-373-0502 or mike.edwards@deq.idaho.gov. If we have more requests than we can fill in one year, preference will be given on a "first-come, first-served" basis, so contact us soon.

Clean Air Zone Participants

To see which schools, school districts, communities, businesses, and facilities have joined the *Clean Air Zone* program to date, go to www.deq.idaho.gov/air/assist_citizen_comm/clean_air_zone_idaho/caz_members.cfm.

Meridian Academy's Ecology Class Takes on Clean Air Zone



At Meridian Academy, students in Jeremy Whitman's ecology class decided it was time to help inform younger students about the Treasure Valley's air

quality. DEQ provided information on air quality for the class. After the students gained the knowledge they needed, they reached out to teach students in grades 1-5.

Mr. Whitman's ecology class created lessons for the younger students. A variety of activities helped raise awareness and excitement among students who participated.



Posters were created to place in the school.

Not only were the students at Meridian Academy teaching tomorrow's future drivers about air quality, they were gathering valuable data at each school they visited. Data were collected on the amount of time parents allowed their vehicles to idle when picking up or dropping off their children at school. Meridian Academy students were present in school parking lots in the morning and raised questions among both parents and children.

After the project was completed, several ecology students reported being approached outside of school by young students who had been taught about air quality. Parents reported that they are now more aware of their car idling. Even Mr. Whitman was approached by a parent who was excited to explain how her student always reminds her to turn off her vehicle when using the drive-thru windows at businesses.

When Meridian Academy students were asked to reflect on the experience, they reported they had grown in several areas. Many had been afraid to talk in small groups, but were becoming confident in their ability to communicate well and manage a classroom of young students. They also reported that being approached by and communicating with adults had become easier.

Waste-Free Lunch Toolkit

Has your school signed up for the new *Waste-Free Lunch* toolkit sponsored by DEQ?

To learn more about how to reduce waste in your school cafeteria, visit DEQ's Web site at www.deq.idaho.gov/WasteFreeLunch or contact Joanna Pierce at (208) 373-0146 or joanna.pierce@deq.idaho.gov.

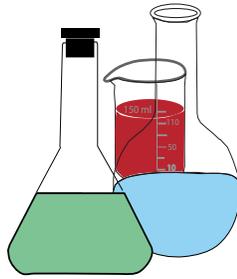


Greening School Laboratories



Have you ever heard the phrase “bulk is always better”? This may be true in some cases, but it is never true when it comes to purchasing chemicals. Purchasing chemicals in bulk will almost always mean more money. If the chemical expires before it can be used up, it becomes hazardous waste, which can be very expensive to properly dispose of. Additionally, the higher the toxicity of the chemical, the more it costs to properly throw away.

DEQ encourages schools to limit purchasing of laboratory chemicals to quantities that can be used up prior to expiring. Also, review lesson plans to see if a less toxic chemical can be used or look for new plans that call for less toxic chemicals and smaller quantities. In King County, Washington’s *Rehab the Lab* program has compiled a database that describes the risk and educational utility of over 900 chemicals and offers lesson plans for least-toxic chemistry labs. Link to the database at www.govlink.org/hazwaste/schoolyouth/rehab/.



For more information on best management practices for school laboratories, including proper storage practices, inventory procedures, and waste disposal information, visit DEQ’s Web site at www.deq.idaho.gov/waste/educ_tools/chemical_roundup.cfm or call DEQ’s pollution prevention specialist at (208) 373-0146.

Consider Marking Storm Drains for a Student Volunteer Project

What Goes Down a Storm Drain?

DEQ discourages dumping of waste down storm drains because these outlets drain directly to surface and ground water. When pollutants such as motor oil, antifreeze, and fertilizer are poured down the storm drain, they end up polluting our rivers, lakes, streams, and ground water. We can help prevent this pollution by alerting citizens to the environmental dangers of pouring hazardous materials down storm drains and encouraging them to properly dispose of these materials.

What is the Storm Drain Marking Toolkit?



The storm drain marking toolkit is a set of materials designed to assist cities and counties in planning and implementing a community event to mark storm drains.

The purpose of the

program is to provide a visible way to advise citizens not to dump waste down storm drains.

The toolkit was developed by the Idaho Departments of Environmental Quality and Fish and Game with assistance from the city of Boise. It consists of various informational materials such as instructions on how to plan and implement a storm drain marking program, items to publicize a marking event, and safety tips. The materials can be used separately or together and can be personalized to your community.

If your school would like to conduct a storm drain marking project, contact Joanna Pierce at (208) 373-0124 or joanna.pierce@deq.idaho.gov. For more information, visit www.deq.idaho.gov/water/prog_issues/storm_water/storm_drain_marking.cfm.

Got Mercury?

Has your school removed all mercury thermometers and other mercury-containing items? Even if these items are no longer in use at your school, recycling or properly disposing of them now can prevent costly spills from happening in the future and protect the health of your students and staff. Make sure all mercury has been cleaned out by looking in all drawers, cabinets, and boxes and in chemistry, physics, and biology classrooms or laboratories, and in the nurse’s office.

Conduct a Mercury Audit in Your School lesson plan:
www.deq.idaho.gov/waste/educ_tools/mercury_audit_lp.pdf

What to Do If You Have a Mercury Spill:
www.deq.idaho.gov/waste/prog_issues/haz_waste/mercury_spill.cfm



Boy Scout troop in Payette, Idaho, volunteering to mark storm drains.



Idaho Department of
Environmental Quality
Clean Air Zone Idaho Program
1410 N. Hilton Boise, ID 83706

First Class Mail
U.S. Postage
PAID
Permit #1
Boise, ID

