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## **DEP Announces “Stop Idling” Enforcement and Public Education Campaign at City Schools in Neighborhoods With High Asthma Rates**

*Two-Week Enforcement Crackdown Aims to Reduce Vehicle Idling Outside Elementary Schools in Neighborhoods with High Incidence of Asthma;*

*Public Education Campaign Distributed Literature in Recognition of Asthma Awareness Month*

Environmental Protection (DEP) Commissioner Carter Strickland today announced a two-week enforcement crackdown on vehicle idling near schools, continuing a public education campaign in neighborhoods with high rates of asthma that began on May 1. In recognition of Asthma Awareness Month, DEP sent information letters and “Stop Idling” flyers to more than 1,400 Department of Education parent coordinators in an effort to reduce illegal idling in school zones. In addition, DEP staff distributed literature to hundreds of parents, teachers and bus drivers at elementary schools in neighborhoods with high asthma rates. Beginning Wednesday, May 23, DEP inspectors will begin targeted enforcement of Local Law 5, which was signed by Mayor Bloomberg in 2009 and limits idling in school zones to one minute. Commissioner Strickland made the announcement with support from Department of Health and Mental Hygiene Commissioner Dr. Thomas Farley, Schools Chancellor Dennis Walcott and Mayor’s Office of Long-Term Planning and Sustainability Director David Bragdon.

“Our efforts show that we can clean the air in the city, and encouraged by these efforts we will do more to make sure that all children have the chance to breathe clean, fresh, and safe air,” said Commissioner Strickland. “Vehicle emissions contribute harmful pollutants to the air we breathe, and we must be particularly attentive to this in areas that have historically seen the highest asthma rates. There’s no better time than Asthma Awareness Month to draw attention to this critical issue, and no better place than near schools where we can improve air quality for New York City school children. Thanks to the extraordinary leadership of Mayor Bloomberg and *PlaNYC*, we are continually working together toward the ambitious goal of ensuring that New York City has the cleanest air of any large city in the nation.”

“There are no cures for asthma, but it can be controlled by avoiding asthma triggers.” said Health Commissioner Dr. Thomas Farley. “We’re working with schools and community partners to educate families on ways to reduce the burden of childhood asthma. Reducing traffic and emissions from vehicles and other sources will benefit not only children with asthma, but all New Yorkers with chronic heart and lung conditions.”

“The ‘Stop Idling’ campaign is an important one to reduce emissions in front of schools and maintain an environmentally-friendly school environment for our students and staff,”

Schools Chancellor Dennis M. Walcott said. “We ensure that bus drivers follow state law that requires all school districts to have school bus drivers turn off their engines while waiting for students, except in cases of emergencies and compliance with special education requirements. The health and welfare of our students and staff are a priority and we need to do everything we can to reduce fumes in front of our schools.”

“As part of *PlaNYC*, we set the goal of achieving the cleanest air of any big city in the U.S.,” said David Bragdon, Director of the Mayor’s Office of Long-Term Planning and Sustainability, “Establishing and enforcing anti-idling laws and increasing awareness of the health, environmental, and financial benefits of curbing idling are some of the many tools we are using to improve our air quality and protect public health.”

Local Law 5 was signed by Mayor Bloomberg in 2009, and limits idling in school zones to one minute and three minutes elsewhere in the city. Using public health data, DEP’s “Stop Idling” campaign targeted elementary schools in neighborhoods with high asthma rates. In addition to distributing literature, and increasing enforcement, DEP has also recommended the installation of “One Minute Idling” signs in front of many schools where idling vehicles were observed. Since 2010, DEP inspectors have surveyed more than 80 public and private schools. In 2011, DEP issued nearly 200 idling violations which can each carry a penalty of \$350.

Illegal idling contributes to overall motor vehicle emissions of harmful air pollutants, including fine particulate matter (PM 2.5, or “soot”), oxides of nitrogen, and organic compounds that contribute to ozone pollution. According to the New York City Community Air Survey, vehicle emissions are one of the leading contributors to harmful air pollutants. Soot pollution alone causes more than 3,000 deaths, 2,000 hospital admissions for lung and heart conditions, and roughly 6,000 emergency room visits for asthma among children and adults in New York City every year. East Harlem reported the highest rate of asthma emergency room visits by both adults and children, with 411 visits per 100,000 residents. In the Bronx, Hunt’s Point-Mott Haven was similarly high, with 313 visits per 100,000 residents.

The City is also acting aggressively to reduce emissions around schools from non-vehicle sources. Through *PlaNYC* the City has invested hundreds of millions of dollars to convert school boilers to cleaner fuels, and will phase out Number 6 heating oil at more than 200 public school buildings by 2015. The City is also currently working with school bus companies to retrofit all full-size vehicles to reduce emissions.

“Stop Idling” builds upon the 2009 “Turn it Off” public education campaign that highlighted the legal, financial, environmental, and health impacts of vehicle idling. For example, “Turn it Off” noted that, in addition to the negative impacts on public health, idling wastes gasoline and shortens engine life. By reducing idling, fleet managers - including school bus operators - can reduce fuel and maintenance costs. “Turn it Off” also more than doubled the number of 311 calls to report illegal idling, a dramatic increase in public awareness. Reducing illegal idling is one of the air quality initiatives of *PlaNYC*, Mayor Bloomberg’s sustainability blueprint for New York City. The “Stop Idling” flyers distributed this month can be found on the DEP [website](#). For more information on New York City Air Quality or to learn more about asthma and how to control it, search “Asthma” at [www.nyc.gov](http://www.nyc.gov).

DEP manages the city’s water supply, providing more than one billion gallons of water each day to more than nine million residents, including eight million in New York City. The

water is delivered from a watershed that extends more than 125 miles from the city, comprising 19 reservoirs and three controlled lakes. Approximately 7,000 miles of water mains, tunnels and aqueducts bring water to homes and businesses throughout the five boroughs, and 7,400 miles of sewer lines and 95 pump stations take wastewater to 14 in-city treatment plants. DEP employs nearly 6,000 employees, including almost 1,000 in the upstate watershed. DEP has a robust capital program, with a planned \$13.2 billion in investments over the next 10 years that creates up to 3,000 construction-related jobs per year. For more information, visit [www.nyc.gov/dep](http://www.nyc.gov/dep), like us on Facebook at [www.facebook.com/nycwater](https://www.facebook.com/nycwater), or follow us on Twitter at [www.twitter.com/nycwater](https://www.twitter.com/nycwater).

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