

## **MAYOR MARVIN'S COLUMN**

Over the summer months, Village Government, School Administration, the Police Department and the Village's Green Committee collaborated to launch an educational effort aimed at the idling of cars in our Village. Back to school seemed the appropriate time to begin the campaign. In February of 2009, the County Legislature enacted a wide ranging ban on the idling of buses, trucks and cars throughout the County. The Village also has an anti-idling provision in the Village Code but not as comprehensive. Given the cost of gasoline, combined with the known effects of pollutants on the human body, it makes sense both financially and environmentally to address this issue in a collaborative way.

Our goal is to achieve compliance with the "no idling" ban by moral suasion than by the commencement of a Draconian enforcement effort. We believe, by taking a page from the rollout of the seat belt law, residents will recognize the validity of the ban and the benefits associated and police themselves because it just makes sense.

In a nutshell, idling is when a driver leaves the car running while not moving. An idling vehicle gets the worst gas mileage possible – 0 miles per gallon.

The new County Anti-Idling Law essentially allows any vehicle in Westchester County, including buses to idle no more than three minutes. The penalty for exceeding this limit is a fine of up to \$250 and/or a jail term not to exceed 15 days. For a second, and any subsequent offenses, the fine can rise to \$500 with a 15 day prison term. The County law must be enforced by County Police and may be enforced by local municipal police departments. Both police officers and parking enforcement officers may issue violations. The local court in which the violation has occurred has final jurisdiction.

The only exceptions to the three minute idling limitation include the idling of a vehicle when the outside temperature is 32° or below, any emergency vehicle used in the performance of its duty, hybrid or electric vehicles or a vehicle that continues to move through a drive line every three minutes or less.

Voluntary idling of vehicles is one of those many daily actions that seem negligible in isolation, but when taken cumulatively, can have a large impact on the total emission of carbon dioxide. Annually this number is staggering

as we burn 1.4 billion gallons of gas and emit 13 tons of CO<sub>2</sub> to go nowhere. So why do we do it? It seems we learned our driving patterns before the electronic ignition became universal and were taught that turning a car off and on wears out the battery and the starter and wastes gas. However, given modern technology, when a car idles, we are actually degrading the engine's ability to operate smoothly and efficiently while wasting gasoline.

Modern engines do not need more than a few seconds of idling time before they can be driven safely and according to car manufacturers the best way to warm up a car is to drive it. Driving will warm up the catalytic converter and other mechanical parts in addition to the engine, thus warming the car twice as quickly as idling. Experts say there is a maximum break even rule – if you are idling more than 10 seconds, both you and your engine are better off if the engine is turned off and restarted because more than 10 seconds of idling wastes more gas than restarting. More importantly, if you are sitting in an idling car, you are breathing in the dirty exhaust that leaks into the passenger area. Pollutants in this car exhaust include carbon monoxide, carbon dioxide and other toxic particulate matter. When inhaled these tiny particles of “soot” travel deep into the lungs and bloodstream aggravating asthmatic conditions, causing breathing difficulty, decreased lung function and exacerbating cardiovascular problems.

Of particular importance is the increased effects of this type of pollution on children and thus the reason we are focusing our initial efforts near the school. Children are more sensitive to this kind of pollution because they breathe more quickly and thus take in more air than adults and spend more hours per day out of doors and exposed to the air quality.

After our initial campaign near the school grounds, we will fan out near the railroad station complex, long an area of car idling.

In the late 1960's, 90% of students living within a mile of their school walked to it – now the number is 31%. Please help us out by not only not idling your car, but if possible leaving your car at home.