

Engine Idling

What is Idling?

Idling occurs when a motor vehicle with a diesel or gasoline engine is running but the vehicle is not in motion. While this is often the result of traffic, there are some instances, such as for example waiting for children outside of schools, or waiting while parking outside a business or residence, when idling is not necessary and it is therefore illegal.

Why leaving a vehicle Idling is a bad thing?

Idling increases the amount of exhaust fumes in the air. These fumes contain a number of harmful gasses including carbon dioxide, which is bad for the environment and contributes towards climate change, as well as a range of other harmful gasses including nitrogen dioxide, carbon monoxide and hydrocarbons which are linked to asthma and other lung diseases.

What's the current legal basis for Idling enforcement in the UK?

The act of idling has constituted an offence in the UK since 1986. The Road Traffic (Vehicle Emission) (Fixed Penalty) (England) Regulations 2002 currently enable local authorities in England to issue Fixed Penalty Notices (FPN) to drivers who allow their vehicle engines to run unnecessarily while the vehicle is parked or stationary. The Regulations include provisions that specify the format and amount of the FPN, which currently is £20. Regulations apply to all vehicles including both private and public transport vehicles.

Current (Vehicle Emission) (Fixed Penalty) (England) Regulations 2002 as it stands makes it hard for traffic officers to enforce these activities. This is because according to this legislation, a FPN can only be imposed if a motorist refuses to switch their engine off when asked to do so by an authorised person, which in practice never happens.

In what situations should a FPN for Idling not be issued?

Regulation 98 (2) of the Road Vehicles (Construction and Use) Regulations 1986, as amended, sets out the circumstances where vehicles are permitted to be stationary with the engine running. These circumstances are:

- Where a vehicle is stationary '*due to traffic conditions*' e.g. where a vehicle is stationary at traffic lights;
- Where an engine is being run so that a fault may be traced and rectified e.g. when a disabled vehicle is being attended to by a breakdown / recovery agent;
- Where machinery on a vehicle requires the engine to be running, e.g. where the engine powers a refrigeration unit or the compaction equipment in a refuse vehicle;

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- Where a vehicle is propelled by gas produced by the functioning of plant carried on the vehicle;

Does the driver need to be in the vehicle for an offence to be committed?

The driver does not have to be in the vehicle for an offence to be committed under Regulation 98. If, for example, a driver has left a vehicle with its engine running to call at a shop, he/she is committing two offences: he/she has committed an offence under Regulation 98 and an offence under Regulation 107, which makes it an offence to leave an engine running in an unattended vehicle except in certain prescribed circumstances.

Are there any plans to review current legislation and give more powers to local authorities to act on idling?

Central Government recognise that current legislation is not working. As such, in June 2019, [a bill](#) to increase penalties for stationary vehicle idling offences; to grant local authorities increased powers to issue such penalties was submitted to the House of Commons.

In July 2019, Transport Secretary Chris Grayling made the commitment to launch a public consultation in 2019, looking at increasing local authorities' powers and guidance to local authorities on their anti-idling powers, enabling them to enforce the law more effectively.

Oxford City Council is patiently waiting for the outcomes of the public consultation and for a future anti-idling bill to become an Act of Parliament (law).

What is Oxford City Council's current approach to Idling?

Oxford City Council, as many local authorities in the UK, recognises the current inefficiencies of the current Idling legislation with regards to enforcement. As such, the City Council has decided to prioritise changing behaviour by educating motorists, which is found to be more effective than issuing fines. We do this by:

- Sending formal letters and regular emails to all companies and businesses that are found to be idling, reminding them that idling is illegal;
- Delivering regular anti-idling campaigns such as ["Oxford air needs your care"](#) in partnership with local Friends of The Earth;
- Delivering regular anti-idling initiatives in schools during drop off & pick up times, with direct involvement of the schools' teachers, members of staff, pupils and student;
- Making [anti-idling campaign materials](#) available on our website such as posters, leaflets, stickers and campaign logos that can be used by local communities and interested groups to run anti-idling campaigns in their local areas