State of New Hampshire
DEPARTMENT OF ENVIRONMENTAL SERVICES
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February 2002

Mr. Keith Burk
Superintendent of Schools SAU #1
106 Hancock Rd.
Peterborough NH 03458

Re: School Bus Idling Initiative

Dear Mr. Burk:

The New Hampshire Department of Environmental Services (DES), in partnership with the New Hampshire School Transportation Association (NHSTA), has recently launched an initiative to protect school children and bus drivers from excessive exposure to exhaust emissions from school buses. As part of this initiative, fleet managers and school bus drivers are encouraged to implement policies and practices to reduce school bus engine idling time whenever practical. We are asking for your support and help with this initiative.

Numerous scientific studies indicate that long term exposure to diesel exhaust can cause lung damage, respiratory problems, and even premature death. A recent study conducted by researchers from Yale University clearly shows that students are exposed to greater concentrations of exhaust emissions while waiting to board and riding on school buses. This study also indicates that the increased exposure is directly related to idling school buses. School bus drivers can make a significant impact on the health of their passengers and their own health by limiting engine idling whenever practical. Furthermore, limiting idling will save fuel, reduce engine wear and tear, and save school bus companies and school districts thousands of dollars each year.

New Hampshire has regulations that establish a limit on the amount of time that motor vehicles, including diesel-powered engines, are permitted to idle. In an effort to reach out to fleet managers and school bus drivers, the NHSTA Board of Directors recently sent a letter to its members encouraging them to adopt a policy restricting idling time consistent with the regulations. The voluntary policy states that school bus drivers should abide by the regulations, and go beyond the regulations whenever practical to minimize school bus idling time. In addition to the letter, the NHSTA published an article in its monthly newsletter about school bus idling and the state regulations (copy enclosed).

You can help us with this initiative by ensuring that your school transportation provider/manager is aware of the state regulations and is implementing policies to curb unnecessary idling of school vehicles. If you have a yearly contract with a school bus transportation company, we ask that you determine whether the company has implemented a policy to limit idling of buses, or if you own and operate your own buses, check to see if your fleet manager has implemented a policy. If your school bus provider does not have an anti-idling policy, they should implement one as soon as possible (perhaps include it as a contract requirement). Such a policy must be consistent with state regulations, which are as follows:

If the outside temperature is above 32 degrees F: 5 minute maximum
If the outside temperature is between -10 and 32 degrees F: 15 minute maximum
If the outside temperature is below –10 degrees F: no limit.

We are pleased to be working with the NHSTA and hope you will join us in our efforts to protect school children and improve air quality. DES and NHSTA are planning numerous outreach activities to publicize this effort throughout the state (e.g., media releases, TV interviews, school bus driver events, and other related activities). We encourage you to communicate your support for this initiative to students, parents and community groups through newsletters, school board meetings, and PTA meetings. DES has developed many outreach materials that are available to help you with your communication efforts.

Please feel free to contact me if you have questions about this initiative. Mike Fitzgerald of my staff is also available at 271-6390 to provide you with additional information on programs and opportunities to reduce diesel exhaust emissions from buses and trucks.

Sincerely,

George Dana Bisbee
Assistant Commissioner

Enclosure
cc: Richard H. Clough, NHSTA
Dan Brown, EPA
NH Association of School Administrators
NH Association of School Boards
Douglas Freese, School Bus Inspector, NH Division of Motor Vehicles
Dr. Anne H. Kubina, NH Department of Health and Human Services
Dr. Naomi Mermin, NEARC