



THE IDLING OF VEHICLES

By Beven Bentley, Community Peace Officer

What does waiting for someone, running an errand, personal comfort, listening to the radio and parking illegally have in common? They are all excuses for idling a vehicle. Here are a couple of more things to consider. If every vehicle owner reduced idling by 5 minutes per day, 680 Million liters of fuel would be saved annually and based on .95 cents per liter, it would mean a saving of 646 million dollars.

This brings me to this week's subject "**The idling of Vehicles**".

Let's begin by getting rid of some myths about the necessity of idling vehicles for extended periods of time and most importantly, let's get rid of the mind set that "because it's a diesel it has to idle".

In checking with various mechanics from our Auto Dealerships regarding the time needed for idling of vehicles, the general consensus was that 10 to 15 minutes of idling would suffice for diesel motors in extremely cold weather and less time for gas motors. **In conditions where the weather is not extremely cold, 5 to 10 minutes may be sufficient for diesel motors and less for gas motors and in warmer weather a few minutes would be all that is needed.**

To verify this information, Bylaw Services attended one of the auto dealerships who through their kindness, offered to take us out in the parking lot and start a diesel truck (cold). The temperature was minus 10c, the windows of the truck were totally frosted and the truck was not plugged in. Within 10 minutes the truck had warmed enough to clear the frost from the windows and the cab warm enough to comfortably drive away. Admittedly, there are some older model diesel trucks that may require a longer idle time than the newer models; however, steps can be taken to minimize the idling time for these as well. There is also a misconception that idling is necessary for extended periods of time to warm the entire vehicle. Idling the vehicle does not warm up moving parts. The recommendation is to idle the vehicle for a short time and slowly drive off to warm up moving parts.

The town's passing of an idling bylaw was a very progressive step, however, a necessary one to express the towns concern for its citizens as well as the environment. Prior to the bylaw vehicles could be seen in various areas of the town, sitting empty and idling for extended periods of time. On passing of the bylaw there was a noticeable change in the number of vehicles idling. During patrols, it was visible that the habit of unnecessary idling had improved, and as well, people were forwarding complaints of others that weren't adhering to the idling restrictions.

What happens when a person does idle their vehicle in excess of the allowable 15 minutes?

The Town of Hinton Bylaw Services Department responds to complaints regarding excessive idling. The officer will obtain the facts as to why the vehicle has been idling beyond the allowable time and determine if the reasons are justified. Excuses such as “it’s a diesel it has to idle”, “my wife doesn’t like to get in a cold car” or “I am keeping the dog warm” won’t work. Such reasons as a dead battery, a faulty alternator or the breaker blew, may work but only once. If it is felt that the idling beyond the allowable 15 minute limit was not justified, a tag may be issued for the offense, the amount for a first offense being \$57.00.

We can be practical about the idling of our vehicles. There are ways of eliminating excessive idling times as well as the problems caused by it, such as plugging the vehicle in, blanketing the windshield, facing the vehicle in a direction where the exhaust won’t be directed at the neighbors residence, speak to a mechanic who can give you the truth on vehicle idling or check the internet for web sites which will give factual information.

With the arrival of colder weather people will be inclined to idle their vehicles longer, the Town of Hinton Bylaw Services would appreciate that idling be kept to a minimum. Less idling will help reduce unnecessary costs, unnecessary noise as well as reduced harmful emissions.

For further information regarding the Idling Bylaw you may call Bylaw Services at 865-6009.