




New York State
Department of Health
Bureau of Emergency Medical Services

POLICY STATEMENT

Supercedes/Updates: New

No. 05 - 01

Date: 02/14/05

**Re: Idling of
Emergency Vehicles**

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In an effort to improve response times, provide the correct resources to patients, Emergency Medical Services agencies are more frequently posting their vehicles in designated locations within their response areas. As a result many emergency vehicles engines sit idling for extended periods of time to facilitate proper climate controls. Because of the associated health and environmental risks, excessive idling of trucks and buses is a violation of Federal, New York State and New York City environmental laws.

Based on these laws, it is expected that EMS agencies will examine their general operating procedures regarding posting EMS vehicles and system status management and develop policies that will insure proper compliance. While ambulances are considered emergency vehicles under the Vehicle and Traffic Law, allowing these vehicles to idle for excessive periods of time in non-emergency operation is not permitted.

The Department of Health, Bureau of EMS considers on-scene operations, or the positioning of an ambulance/EMS response vehicle in designated locations within a community, as a component of a planned emergency response system, to be emergency operation. However, when EMS agencies position vehicles, consideration must be given to the impact on the community. The EMS agency must be flexible in re-positioning vehicles to limit the environmental impact on the community.

The New York State and New York City laws limit the amount of time a truck or bus may idle. Vehicle owners and operators, and in some cases people who control buildings or land, are subject to fines and legal actions for violations. All truck and bus drivers should insure that vehicle idling is minimized, and that engine idling times are within the legal limits prescribed by law.

The following are sections of both the State law as well as the New York City law.

Under New York State Environmental Conservation Law, heavy duty trucks and buses may not idle for more than five (5) consecutive minutes.

The exceptions to the law include:

- When the engine is powering an auxiliary function, such as loading or unloading cargo, or mixing concrete;
- When running the engine is required for maintenance; or
- When fire, police, utility or other vehicles are performing emergency services.

Under New York City Environmental Protection Law, trucks and buses may not idle for more than 3 consecutive minutes.

The law provides for two exceptions:

- When the engine is powering a loading, unloading, or processing device; or
- When the vehicle is a legally authorized emergency vehicle.

Unless in emergency operation, ambulances and first response vehicles ARE NOT exempt from the provisions of these environment conservation laws. The penalties for violation of these laws may include fines ranging from \$250 to \$15,000.

For more information:

- New York State's idling regulation is found at 6 NYCRR § 217-3.2.
- New York City's idling regulation is found at NYC Administrative Code § 24-163.
- The American Lung Association - www.alanys.org
- The US Environmental Protection Agency – www.epa.gov/otag
- The NYS Attorney General – www.oag.state.ny.us
- The NYS Department of Environmental Conservation – www.dec.state.ny.us