



IDLE THREATS

Car myths

Think about the last time you let your car idle for more than a few minutes. Were you waiting for someone? Were you stuck in traffic? Were you early to a meeting and listening to the radio?

When we sit in our cars and let the engine idle, we often do so out of habit or because of outdated information. That's why this month's Green Matters will tackle the myths of car idling and clear up some common misconceptions.

To most, idling a car seems harmless. But look further, and this easily unnoticed practice not only wastes gas, but pollutes surrounding air, and over time can damage your engine.

The average American driver spends over **16 minutes a day** idling, commonly in drive-thrus, driveways, banks, car washes, schools, waiting for trains, and on bridges.

All this idling adds up to approximately **3.8 million gallons** of gasoline wasted every day! In 2009, the City of Portland adopted new rules to reduce it's fleet's idling. The city estimates this policy will reduce the City's fuel usage. See the [idle reduction policy](#) for more detail.

So, if you're waiting to pick someone up, sitting in a traffic jam, waiting for a train, etc., save yourself some money and turn your engine off.



Idling gets you **0** miles per gallon

Annual savings by eliminating 16 minutes of avoidable daily idling

Engine	Annual		
	Gas saved	Money saved*	CO2 saved
4 Cylinder	32 gal.	\$116	704 lbs.
8 Cylinder	64 gal.	\$233	1,408 lbs.

*based on avg. estimated gas price of \$3.65

Myth 1: Cars should idle for several minutes before being driven.

Wrong. Modern engines do not need more than a few seconds of idling time before they can be driven safely. Per the [idle reduction policy](#), City vehicles may only idle for one minute if stopped for a foreseeable period of time.

Myth 2: Starting your car wastes more gas than if you let it idle.

Wrong. Due to the efficiency of today's cars, this is untrue. Idling engines must operate in a fuel-rich state in order to keep turning. Generally, if you need to wait more than 10 seconds, turn it off.

Myth 3: Repeatedly restarting drains the battery/hurts the engine.

Wrong. Frequently restarting you engine does negligible damage to the engine and does not drain modern batteries excessively.

TIPS:

Warm it up...

Your engine only needs about 30 seconds to warm up, even in cold weather.

Turn it off...

If you need to idle for more than 10 seconds. This also prevents overheating.

Restart...

10 seconds of idling wastes more fuel than restarting.