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## **School no-idling project promotes cleaner air for kids**

Improving air quality at local schools is the focus of a no-idling campaign sponsored by the Lane Regional Air Protection Agency (LRAPA). Graphic no-idling signs are available to local schools free of charge to help spread the message about keeping school zones idle-free. “The beginning of the school year marks the beginning of unnecessary exposure to air pollution for local school children,” says Sally Markos of LRAPA. Children in elementary and middle school are exposed to elevated levels of pollution from the exhaust of idling school buses and vehicles in drop-off zones. The goal of the campaign is to educate people about the importance of turning off their vehicles to reduce childrens’ exposure to harmful vehicle exhaust.

A single vehicle dropping off and picking up kids at one school puts three pounds of pollution into the air per month. Multiply that by hundreds of vehicles per day and the risk increases for children to develop asthma and other respiratory diseases. “Asthma is the most common chronic illness in children and the cause of most school absences,” says Markos, “children’s asthma symptoms increase as a result of car exhaust.” Because their lungs are still developing, children are highly susceptible to health problems from air pollution. Children also have a faster breathing rate than adults and take in about 50% more air per pound than adults.

The free no-idling signs are available for any Lane County school to install at drop-off zones. Educational materials have also been developed for parents to alert them to the health risks posed by exposure to exhaust from idling vehicles. Awareness of the problem has led local school districts to encourage schools to create no-idle zones as a measure to protect childrens’ health. Schools in the Bethel School District have already installed a dozen signs and schools in the Junction City, Oakridge, Cottage Grove, Springfield and Eugene School Districts are also coming on board.

“We’re asking our parents to be active partners in improving air quality for all kids,” Eugene School District Superintendent George Russell said. “It’s a simple but critical change that we’re asking for this year, and we hope that it helps everyone breathe easier around our schools.”

For more information about the LRAPA no-idling project, call Sally Markos, 736-1056 ext. 217. For more information about no-idling efforts at the Eugene 4J School District, call Kelly McIver at 687-3245.

*The Lane Regional Air Protection Agency’s mission is to protect public health, quality of life and the environment as a leader and advocate for the continuous improvement of air quality in Lane County.*

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