Encouraging drivers to switch off their engines

A new sticker campaign has been launched encouraging drivers to switch off their engines when their vehicle is parked.

This is the latest phase in our ongoing ‘Care about your air’ campaign, which focuses on reducing unnecessary engine idling across the borough.

The stickers are designed to be displayed on the rear windscreen of vehicles, and act as a visible reminder for nearby motorists to switch off their engines while they wait - particularly drivers waiting to collect children from school.

Leaving a vehicle engine running while stationary, even for short periods, can lead to a build up of harmful pollutants which can effect air quality, increase the risk of chest infections and aggravate respiratory conditions - it is estimated that an idling car causes enough emissions to fill 150 balloons every minute.

Children are particularly vulnerable to the effects of pollution from idling vehicles because they breathe faster and inhale more fumes. They are also closer in height to vehicle exhaust pipes, meaning children walking past, waiting to cross the road or sitting in buggies are exposed to concentrated pollutants.

Environmental health officers recently visited Abbey Road Primary School to hand out the stickers to parents and carers during school pick up. They were joined by junior road safety officers from year five who handed out information flyers and spoke to people collecting children about the effect of leaving their engine running.

Cheryl Freer, a school mum in support of the initiative, said: “Cutting your engine is for everyone’s benefit - it’s better for our children’s health and it’s more environmentally friendly.”

Deputy head teacher at Abbey Schools, Joanne Neasham, added: “It’s been great for our junior road safety officers to be involved with this campaign, which is an extension of the work they are already doing to support traffic management around the school. I was incredibly proud to see our young people speaking so confidently and knowledgably about this important issue with adults in our school community and am eager to build upon their enthusiasm to help reduce harmful emissions around our school!”

Other schools, groups and early years providers interested in supporting the campaign can request stickers by emailing environmentalhealth@darlington.gov.uk.

Similar stickers will also start to be given to taxi owners as part of the council's taxi licensing renewal process, to further help spread the message.

Cllr Chris McEwan, deputy leader, Darlington Borough Council, said: "Giving children the best start in life, making sure local people live well for longer and having a clean and sustainable borough are three of our top priorities. The new stickers are an effective, low-cost way to ensure important messages about engine idling are shared in the right places, at the right times and that that they reach the right people.

“Recent data shows that more than 7% of people in Darlington have asthma and nearly 3,000 people in our communities have a COPD diagnosis. Cutting your engine when you park is a small action you can take to help protect our most vulnerable residents from preventable harm and will help improve air quality for everyone.”

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