

Myths versus Facts of Bus Idling

Myth #1: It's better to leave the engine idling because cold starts/restarting a bus produces more pollution.

FACT: Cold starts/restarting engines create less carbon monoxide. At Soddy Daisy High School, our teachers' parking lot and morning entrance to the school are in the loop of idling buses lined up for student drop-off. Our air intake building for the school's heating/cooling system is also in that loop. When idling, congregated buses release a higher density of particulate matter than buses not in a line. Turning off the engine when waiting more than 5 minutes will drastically decrease such pollutants.

Myth #2: It's better for an engine to run at low speed (idling) than to run at regular speed.

FACT: Idling often causes up to twice the wear and tear on internal engine parts. Bus manufacturers routinely suggest warm-up time for buses is only 3-5 minutes, even in cold weather. The EPA encourages school districts in several states following bus manufacturer suggestions for proper engine maintenance.

Myth #3: Idling is necessary to keep cabs comfortable temperatures and inside equipment working properly.

FACT: Equipment inside the cabs can be operated without the engine running, particularly on newer buses similar to what's expected in the 2019-2020 school year in Hamilton County. If needed, the internal circuitry in older buses allows inside equipment to continue operating safely. Bus routes should be timed so that students and drivers do not spend extra or unnecessary time on a bus not in-route. Allowing students to enter SDHS and Soddy Daisy Middle School at 6:45 promotes stability in cost-saving efficiency in our bus routes and bus arrival times.

