

Pennsylvania Diesel Idling Reduction Rule

The Pennsylvania Environmental Quality Board approved the proposed diesel idling reduction rulemaking for public comment on October 16, 2007. The proposed rule was published January 12, 2008 for public comment and three public hearings were held. The public comment period closed March 17, 2008.

Implementation of this rule is expected to decrease air pollution emissions through the reduction of diesel fuel combustion. Generally, the proposed regulation would limit idling by commercial diesel-powered vehicles to five minutes per hour. According to DEP calculations, long-duration idling, an engine idling for more than 15 minutes, amounts to about 22.3 million hours a year in Pennsylvania alone. They estimate that 95% of that total is due to truck travel rest periods which are mandated by the federal government. If each of the estimated 13,000 long-haul trucks that idle in Pennsylvania each day used an auxiliary power system to provide power during rest periods, that could result in the reduction of fuel usage by more than 20 million gallons per year. Products of fuel combustion are nitrogen oxide (NO_x) and volatile organic compounds (VOCs), both of which are precursors ground-level ozone and fine particulate matter. Ozone and fine particulate matter are pollutants that can cause or pose a health hazard to people with pre-existing respiratory conditions such as asthma, bronchitis, and emphysema. DEP estimates annual NO_x emissions reductions of 1,610 tons, VOCs emission reductions of 45 tons, and particulate matter emission reductions of 30 tons, once this rule is fully implemented in 2010.

The proposed rule includes several exemptions to address issues such as adverse weather, lack of alternative power options, and those involving equipment operation, maintenance, safety, and passenger comfort.