

Belmont Citizen-Herald

Column: Turn off your engine

Thursday, August 31, 2006

Good air quality is vital to our health. The town of Belmont, with the assistance of Sustainable Belmont, is spearheading a campaign to help all of us do our part to reduce pollution from the cars, trucks and buses in our town.

A recent study by Sustainable Belmont looked at the causes of greenhouse gas emissions in Belmont that contribute to climate change and found that cars and buses are the major contributors. Vehicles also contribute to ground-level ozone that compromises local air quality and dirty diesel engines spew exhaust, which contains small particles that can trigger asthma.

The good news is that we can all do something to reduce the amount of pollution from our cars, trucks and buses. It's easy, and it saves money and fuel. We can simply turn off our engines when we're not using them.

The town of Belmont, with the assistance of Sustainable Belmont, has received state funds to help us make our town an idle-free community by raising awareness about the issue. Many of us were surprised to learn that:

- Idling your engine for more than 10 seconds wastes more fuel than restarting the engine. Please turn off your engine if you are not driving.
- Every gallon of gasoline used, either when the car is running or idling, results in 20 pounds of greenhouse gas emissions released into the atmosphere.
- It is against the law in Massachusetts, with a few exceptions, to idle for longer than five minutes.

The Cleaning the Air Campaign committee is looking at other ways to increase clean air in Belmont, including making sure our diesel buses are as clean as possible and creating a more pedestrian-friendly town. Town departments will lead by example. For instance, the town's entire school bus fleet meets the most up-to-date emissions control standards and all the school bus drivers will be trained to reduce idling.

We encourage you to join us in doing your part as we do ours by not idling.

Turn off the car when you run in to pay for gas, wait for a child to come out of school, or dash back into your house to get something. It's really that easy to start protecting our air.

If you would like more information or would like to volunteer to help with the Cleaning the Air campaign, please e-mail Sustainable Belmont at sustainablebelmont@gmail.com.

This letter was signed by: Belmont Board of Selectmen: William Brownsberger, Angelo R. Firenze and Paul Solomon; Town Administrator Thomas G. Younger; Superintendent of Schools Dr. Peter Holland; Health Department Director Donna Moultrup; Acting Police Chief Richard Lane; Police Sgt. Ken Hamilton; Vision 21 Implementation Committee Chairman Jennifer Page; and Sustainable Belmont Co-chairmen Jan Kruse and Heather Tuttle.