



1.0 Purpose and Objective:

Pierce County is committed to sustainability and protecting our environment. The purpose of this policy is to protect public and employee health by preventing exposure to potentially harmful exhaust fumes, to improve the environment by reducing emissions of greenhouse gases and toxic air contaminants, and to lower costs by reducing fuel expenditures and equipment wear. By creating a Right-Sized fleet and limiting idling time, air pollution and greenhouse gas emissions will be reduced, thus promoting a healthier work and world environment and the efficient use of county resources.

2.0 Scope:

This policy applies to all staff operating vehicles and equipment owned or leased by Pierce County.

3.0 Definitions:

3.1 Idling

Idling means the operation of a vehicle or equipment while they are not in motion and not being used to operate auxiliary equipment.

3.2 Fuels

This includes fossil fuels which include gasoline, diesel, propane, hydrogen and natural gas used to operate vehicles or equipment.

3.3 Layover

Layover refers to a stop or breaks in a trip typically due to scheduling.

3.4 Vehicles

Vehicles or equipment refers to cars, light trucks, vans, heavy truck, snow equipment, transit buses, loaders, backhoes, street sweepers, and any other equipment operated by staff and utilizing fossil fuels.

3.5 Right-Sizing

Right-sizing is an approach in purchasing the most efficient fleet to accomplish the tasks required. It takes into consideration such factors as engine size, passenger and carrying capacity, weight and maintenance and fuel costs. The practice of right-sizing allows for savings on capital and operating costs as well as reducing vehicle emissions.

4.0 Responsibilities:

The following guidelines pertain to all county employees. Specific group responsibilities are outlined and address issues such as fuel and resource efficiency, economy of resources, air quality, driving conditions and legality.

All Pierce County employees who drive a county vehicle:

4.1 Shall not cause or permit gas-powered vehicles covered by this policy to idle for more than 30 seconds or a diesel-powered vehicle for more than three minutes in a 60-minute period, except as allowed under policy exemptions described in section 5.0. Vehicles idling within these allowed limits must do so outside of buildings and away from fresh air intakes, air conditioners, and windows.

4.2 Shall avoid sudden stops and quick acceleration, whenever possible, while driving on County business.

4.3 Shall efficiently schedule and plan meetings, appointments, and site visits, and shall carpool when practical. Meeting times and locations shall be scheduled so as to minimize travel distances for the participants. Public Transportation should be used in lieu of rental cars where practical when traveling out of state.

4.4 Shall obey posted speed limits while driving on County business, except in emergency or law-enforcement responses.

4.5 Shall shut off vehicle engines immediately upon reaching their destination, except Heavy Duty diesel engines, which require a two minute “cool down” period.

4.6 Shall not idle while waiting for passengers, attending meetings, or during layovers.

4.7 Shall not idle solely for the purpose of heating or cooling the inside of the vehicle before operation unless the use of the defroster is required to clear snow and ice from windows for safety:

4.7.1 If the temperature is between 10 degrees F and 32 degrees F, vehicle may idle long enough to allow for an appropriate temperature to be reached and maintained within the vehicle.

4.7.2 If the temperature is less than 10 degrees F, vehicle may idle for approximately 10 minutes, or until the vehicle has reached an acceptable and safe temperature.

4.7.3 If the temperature exceeds 80 degrees F, vehicle may idle long enough to cool passengers and ensure safe working conditions.

4.8 Shall use good judgment to implement anti-idling practices when operating a county vehicle.

4.9 Shall remain with the vehicle when engines must be left running for any reason.

4.10 Shall ensure that the tires of vehicles are properly inflated and tire pressure is checked at least monthly.

Pierce County Fleet Maintenance Staff:

4.11 Shall ensure fleet and all other vehicles are in proper operating condition and kept well maintained.

Pierce County Fleet Managers:

4.12 Shall keep abreast of pollutant reduction and fuel saving technologies and implement when practical.

4.13 Shall work to evaluate the most appropriate vehicle for the intended purpose prior to purchase (Right-sizing). Fleet efficiency is optimized when the most appropriate size and class of vehicle for the intended application is purchased and utilized.

Pierce County Departments and Supervisors:

4.14 Each supervisor will monitor for compliance and inform the vehicle operator of violation at the time of the infraction.

4.15 Each supervisor will coordinate with the Equipment Services Division or the Fleet Rental Division to assure employees receive appropriate vehicle operator training for compliance with this policy.

4.16 Each department using County-owned vehicles shall be responsible for monitoring and verifying compliance of their vehicles.

5.0 Policy Exemptions

This policy does not apply to the following vehicles, equipment or situations. Operators must use their own discretion in certain situations.

5.1 Emergency vehicles and equipment are exempted while engaged in activities such as Law Enforcement assistance or Public Works and Utilities operations.

5.2 Vehicles assisting in an emergency activity are exempt. A vehicle may idle to prevent a safety or health emergency.

5.3 A vehicle may idle to operate auxiliary equipment, as required for necessary business operations.

5.4 Vehicles may idle for the purpose of defogging, defrosting or de-icing windows. Idling must cease when fog, frost, or ice conditions have been eliminated.

5.6 Staff may idle vehicles/equipment for the purpose of getting warm and/or dry if indoor accommodations are not available at the work site.

5.7 During the winter season with below zero temperatures and/or blizzard conditions and during summer periods of extreme heat, extended idling periods may be necessary for the well being of the operator and passengers.

5.8 A vehicle may idle for maintenance, servicing, repairing, or diagnostic purposes if idling is required for such activity.

5.9 Where safety may be compromised by shutting down the engine, vehicles/equipment may idle at the discretion of the operator.

5.10 A vehicle may idle while forced to remain motionless because of traffic congestion, when required to yield the right of way to responding emergency vehicles, at an official traffic control device or signal, or at the direction of a law enforcement official.

5.11 A vehicle may idle as part of a state or federal inspection if required.

5.12 Operating an auxiliary power unit, generator set, or other mobile idle reduction technology as a means to heat, air condition, or provide electrical power as an alternative to idling the main engine is allowed and shall not be considered idling.

6.0 Consequences of Violations

Willful or blatant violation of this policy may result in disciplinary action.

7.0 Policy Evaluation

This policy should be regularly evaluated to ensure it is enabling and effectively moving Pierce County towards its sustainability goals.