

# Dare to Care About the Air

## Executive Summary

### Washington State Department of Ecology: Idling Focus Groups

#### **Purpose and Methodology**

In order to get a better understanding of why residents in Washington idle their vehicles, particularly parents picking up their kids at school, a series of focus groups were conducted in May 2003.<sup>1</sup> Working with PRR, Inc., a moderator guide was developed to explore reasons for vehicle idling and the link to air quality that included:

- Overall concern and importance about air quality.
- General car idling behavior.
- Car idling in school zones.
- Awareness of car idling and air quality.
- Barriers & motivators to changing vehicle idling behavior.
- Motivating & message concept testing.

Four focus groups were conducted in four different locations across the State. Ten to eleven participants were recruited for each group. Recruitment took place to ensure representation by:

- Parents of school-aged children.
- General public, not necessarily with school-aged children.
- Rural drivers.
- Urban drivers.
- Eastern Washington.
- Western Washington.

Following is a breakdown of the four different groups: A complete profile for each group can be found in Appendix C.

Location	Description	# of participants
Seattle	Urban General Audience	8
Snohomish	Rural Parents of school-aged children	11
Moses Lake	Rural General Audience	10
Spokane	Urban Parents of school-aged children	6

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<sup>1</sup> This does not include commercial trucks, commercial vehicles, farm equipment etc. This study only pertains to residential vehicle use.

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## Air Quality Concerns

Participants were initially asked their level of concern for air quality as compared to other concerns they had for their world. They were also asked about participating in behaviors such as burning, using gas powered lawn tools, using a wood burning stove, etc., that may contribute to the overall air quality. Participants also shared their thoughts on who was most responsible for air quality. The following table highlights the differences for each group.

LOCATION	CONCERN	BEHAVIORS	RESPONSIBILITY
Seattle (urban general audience)	Air quality is a big concern for this group	They do not burn, but use barbecues and gas mowers	Government should encourage people to preserve & improve our air quality
Snohomish (rural parents of school-aged children)	Air quality is important, but nothing to be too concerned about. The air could be worse compared to other places lived (i.e. LA).	Have diesel vehicles, use gas tools, and burn when they can.	Feel individuals are responsible, could burn less, idle cars less, and use the bus.
Moses Lake (rural general audience)	Air quality is important but not as bad as other places. Don't see the direct effect on them since such a rural area.	Lots of burning, gas powered lawn tools	Everyone is responsible, but Moses Lake doesn't have enough people to affect air quality.
Spokane (urban parents of school-aged children)	Very aware of air quality and link to health, however not so much from emissions but from field burning, dust, and pollen.	Burn, use wood to heat, and use gas powered lawn tools.	People could be responsible if they are taught, most don't know how they contribute to air quality.

## Car Idling Behavior

When asked to estimate total discreet trips they made on an average day, most respondents estimated one or two round trips per day. Participants, in general, did not seem able to accurately estimate total locations visited.

For all groups the most common places and reasons that people idle their vehicles are:

- Drive-through (fast food, bank, etc).
- Drop-off or pick-up kids from school.
- Drive kids to after school/other activities.

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- Waiting for ferries/bridges.
- Watching kids play games such as softball.
- To warm car up when the weather is cold (defrost the windows was very common).
- Listening to the radio, run windshield wipers, while waiting for kids/family.

Warming up the car when the weather is cold to defrost the windows, and to keep the car warm for love ones (i.e. kids, elderly relatives) was mentioned more frequently than any other reason for idling vehicles.

The two parent groups (Spokane and Snohomish) are frequently picking up and dropping off their kids at school, mostly because they either live too far away from a bus stop, or they live too close to the school to be eligible for bus service. Most parents feel the need to drive their kids for safety reasons.

Most admitted to idling their car at the school, sometimes for up to 15 minutes. Many stated this was due to the design of school parking lots. The lots encourage idling because vehicles need to slowly move up to the front of the line to pick up kids. Also when it is cold out, there is no other place to wait but in your car. Other situations where individuals idled their cars included:

- Individuals who work from their vehicles, such as landscapers, run their vehicles when they take breaks—to warm up and to listen to the radio, etc.
- In smaller communities, there was some mention of leaving the car idle while running errands.
- There was some mention of perceived mandatory idling such as at the airport or in front of hospitals.

### Awareness of Idling Issue

Before discussing their awareness of idling, participants were asked to mark the following statements as True or False<sup>2</sup>. The following table highlights the results of that exercise:

	% True	% False
Idling an engine uses less fuel than restarting it	26%	73%
Idling doesn't produce unnecessary pollution	6%	94%
It is easier on the vehicle starter to let it idle	71%	29%
Turning off the engine would save significantly on gas costs	73%	27%
Turning off the engine would be the right thing to do	91%	9%
Idling is important to warm the engine	30%	70%

For the most part, except in Moses Lake, people did not feel they had to let their car warm up before driving. Most felt that a minute or so was plenty, unless it was cold outside and defrosting the car was necessary. One person in Snohomish, who drove a diesel pick-up truck, admitted that for this particular car she had to let it warm up much longer.

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<sup>2</sup> See Appendix A for full breakdown of worksheet data.

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Many in Moses Lake had the perception that in order for all the oil to be distributed properly warming up your car was required. (However, this could be because some participants in Moses Lake drove older cars). This group also thought that turning the car on and off might be harmful. Overall, this group was more concerned about harm to their cars than the other groups.

When asked how long they could idle their car before it was using more fuel than it would take to restart, most participants felt it would be about 2 to 3 minutes. However, responses ranged anywhere from 30 seconds to 15 minutes.

All the groups admitted that idling their cars is probably bad and that they should consider idling less. However, they did not think it was a huge contributor to overall air quality. They felt it was a very small portion compared to other contributors (field burning, industry, etc.). Those in Seattle seemed to understand the link between air quality and idling more than the other groups.

There was not an apparent understanding that diesel is more harmful and that buses are diesel.

### **Barriers and Motivators to Change Idling Behavior**

Most participants agreed that after discussing the effects of idling (through the focus group) that they would at least try to change their idling behavior. However, there was an understanding that if their car were too cold they would still warm it up for their kids or other family members. And those with diesels will still warm up the vehicle so that it will run properly.

Those in the parent groups (Snohomish & Spokane) felt it would be easier to stop idling at school if the parking lot designs were more suited for pick up and drop off.

Parents would be agreeable to a "no idle zone" sign at the school, however those in Snohomish, Spokane and Moses Lake would not like the schools to make this mandatory. Participants in Spokane felt that making it a mandatory behavior would be pointless without enforcement. It was also mentioned that if the school buses didn't stop idling, it would be difficult to get the parents to stop idling.

### **Most Motivating Reasons**

- 1) For all participants, learning that their children's health, or their own health was in jeopardy because of vehicle idling was the most compelling information they could think of to get them to stop idling.
- 2) Potential gas saving as well as real statistics on monetary savings would also be very compelling to them.
- 3) For the Seattle group, facts about personal impact on the environment was the other most mentioned motivator.

### **Ways they would want to get this information**

- Physicians

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- Sending things home with their kids from school is critical
- Radio (especially since they are listening while idling)
- Bus banners/ Bill boards
- Multiple sources (Government/car dealer etc.)

Participants in Moses Lake felt that car manufacturers and car dealers would also have to participate in providing this information. For them it would be conflicting to hear that idling is bad for your health, but at the same time hear from manufacturers that you have to warm up your car. However for all participants, it was extremely important to understand what features in the car would still work with the engine off such as the radio, wipers, heater, etc. and for how long the battery would last.

Those in the Spokane, Snohomish, and Moses Lake groups were particularly anti-government and would pay less attention to information from state/local agencies. The Seattle group felt government was a reliable source and would encourage information from local government sources. Other than Seattle, the participants were not very apt to listen to environmental groups, such as the Sierra Club, because they are seen as too extreme and what they say is considered suspect.

Overall, there was a feeling that similar information from multiple sources carried more validity.

### Motivator Testing

Participants were shown the following potential motivators:

- Preserve our air for future generations.
- Not idling will improve fuel consumption.
- Not idling will save money.
- Not idling will reduce emissions.
- Not idling will help you breathe easier.
- Not idling will ensure your child is healthier.
- Idling at school is extremely dangerous to your child's health.
- One car, in one month can put out three pounds of emissions just dropping off a child at school.
- Child asthma is on the rise and there is a direct link to air quality.
- Not idling will help protect the environment.
- Not idling will extend the life of your car.

Of these motivators, those relating to health, and children's health in particular, were the most motivating for the participants. Saving money was also motivating to the participants.

One of the most popular motivators was: one car, in one month can put out three pounds of emissions just dropping off a child at school. Even though many participants stated that they didn't exactly know what this statement meant (how bad it really was), they did like that it was factual. Most of the participants expressed a need for statistical and factual information on how idling was bad. The least popular motivators were anything to do with protecting the environment.

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## Message Testing: Pre-discussion Ranking Worksheet Results

Before discussing the messages, participants were first asked to rank in order (from 1 to 9, with 1 liking the most) the following message concepts in terms of how much they liked them:

- Do your air share
- For clean air – turn left here
- The great switch off
- You burn it, you breathe it
- Turn it off
- Spare the air
- For our health
- For our air
- Breathe easier

The Top 3 Messages Overall (by average score)<sup>3</sup>:

- You burn it, you breathe it and Breathe easier (3.9)
- For our health (4.2)
- Do your air share (4.5)

The message “you burn it you breathe it,” was very popular with the Spokane and Snohomish group. The Spokane group in particular, liked this message due to their strong feelings about the field burning in the area. The message “breathe easier” was popular with the Moses Lake and Seattle group. See the table below for the breakdown by location.

Location	Top Message	Other Top Messages
Moses Lake	Breathe easier (3.8)	For our health (3.9) For our air (4.7)
Spokane	You burn it, you breathe it (1.7)	Do your air share (4) Spare the air (4)
Seattle	Breathe easier (3.3)	For our health (3.7) Turn it off (3.8)
Snohomish	You burn it, you breathe it (3.1)	Do your air share (3.7) Breathe easier (4)

## Discussion of Message Ranking

The discussion of these messages revealed that none of them were strongly favored by participants. The Moses Lake group in particular indicated that they didn't really like any of the messages. The Snohomish group also agreed that even though many of them rated “you burn it, you breathe it” as a favorite, they thought it might be related to smoking instead of idling.

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<sup>3</sup> See Appendix A for complete breakdown of worksheet data.

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Those in the Spokane group still preferred the message “you burn it, you breathe it” but also agreed that it might be due to their strong feelings about agricultural field burning issues in the area rather than to idling.

For all groups, most participants agreed that the messages should relate to idling. The discussions revealed preferences for messages that emphasized health, air quality, and turning it off.

## **Suggestions offered by participants**

Participants offered the following message concept suggestions:

- It’s your choice to care, to help prevent bad air; It’s your choice to breathe
- 10 seconds count—for our health, for our air, for our environment
- It is not cool to idle at school
- Spare the air, do your share
- Switch off
- Don’t be idle about air quality
- The great turn off

Overall most participants again felt that messages relating to health and money would be the most effective at changing people’s idling behavior.

## **Conclusions**

Overall people in these groups idle their cars more for convenience (warmth, listening to radio, waiting, etc) than to protect their vehicles. Most participants hadn’t really given any thought to their idling behavior and how that could affect air quality. When prompted, the participants agreed that less idling would be better. This is especially true around school areas if idling really does cause health concerns for children.

None of the participants had a really strong understanding of the link between air quality and idling their vehicles. However, those in urban areas, such as Seattle and Spokane, had stronger concerns about air quality than those in rural areas. And even though they had strong concerns about air quality, participants in Spokane felt it was mostly due to field burning and not so much from vehicle idling.

To get these participants to stop idling, messages should include facts stating the dangers to their children’s health, and statistics showing how they could save money on less fuel. If reasons are vague, they will not believe that their idling behavior affects air quality.

## **Appendices to Follow**

Appendix A: Focus Group Worksheet Totals

Appendix B: Summary of Vehicles Driven by Participants

Appendix C: Participant Profiles

Appendix D: Discussion Guide and Worksheets

# Dare to Care About the Air

## Appendix A: Focus Group Worksheet Totals

Total True/False Assignments to the Following Statements

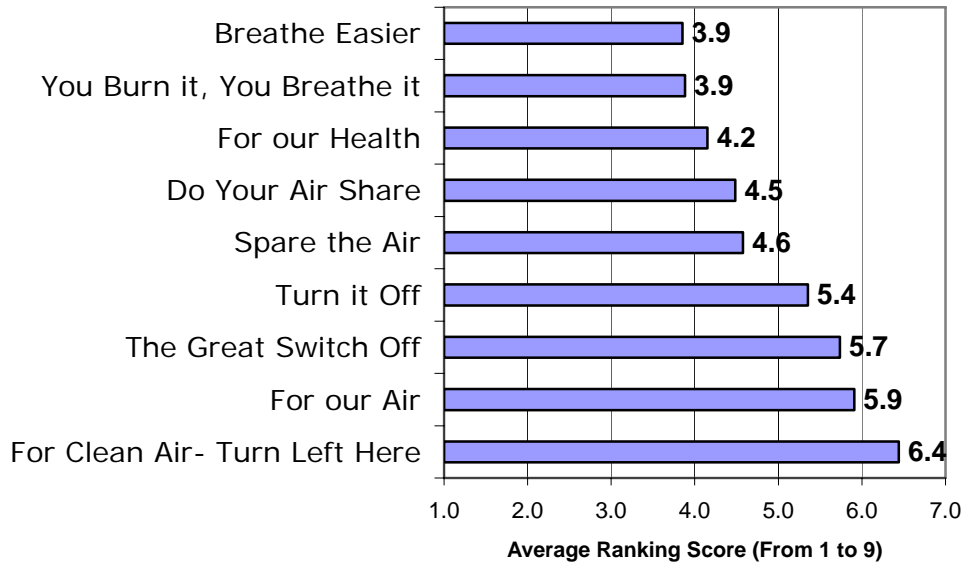
	% True	% False
Idling an engine uses less fuel than restarting it	26%	73%
Idling doesn't produce unnecessary pollution	6%	94%
It is easier on the vehicle starter to let it idle	71%	29%
Turning off the engine would save significantly on gas costs	73%	27%
Turning off the engine would be the right thing to do	91%	9%
Idling is important to warm the engine	30%	70%

## Total True/False Assignment by Location

	Idling an engine uses less fuel than restarting it	Idling doesn't produce unnecessary pollution	It is easier on the vehicle starter to let it idle	Turning off the engine would save significantly on gas costs	Turning off the engine would be the right thing to do	Idling is important to warm the engine
Moses Lake						
True	50%	0%	80%	80%	90%	40%
False	50%	100%	20%	20%	10%	60%
Spokane						
True	33%	0%	83%	50%	100%	33%
False	67%	100%	33%	33%	0%	50%
Snohomish						
True	20%	20%	60%	50%	70%	20%
False	80%	80%	40%	40%	20%	80%
Seattle						
True	0%	0%	63%	88%	100%	13%
False	100%	100%	38%	13%	0%	88%

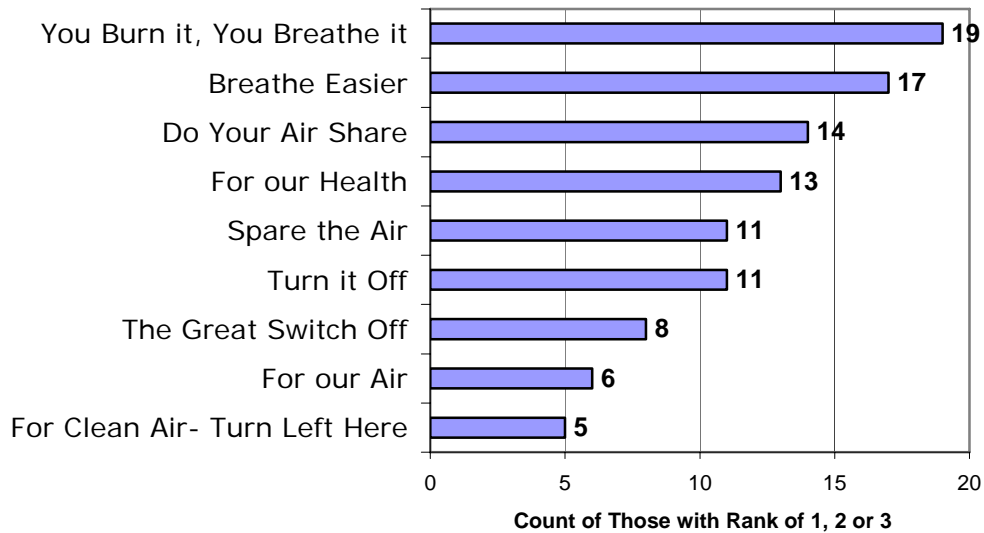
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## Overall Message Preference Ranking by Average



## Overall Message Preference by Count of Ranks

*(Count of those messages given a rank of 1, 2, or 3)*



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## Top 3 Messages by Location

(Based on Average Score)

Location	Top Message	Other Top Messages
Moses Lake	Breathe easier (3.8)	For our health (3.9) For our air (4.7)
Spokane	You burn it, you breathe it (1.7)	Do your air share (4) Spare the air (4)
Seattle	Breathe easier (3.3)	For our health (3.7) Turn it off (3.8)
Snohomish	You burn it, you breathe it (3.1)	Do your air share (3.7) Breathe easier (4)

## Appendix B: Summary of Vehicles Driven by Participants

### Moses Lake

Year	Make	GAS/Diesel
	Ford Explorer	Gas
1992	Hondo Civic	Gas
1996	Ford Taurus	Gas
1991	Cadillac	Gas
1997	Dodge Caravan	Gas
1993	Chevy S10	Gas
1982	Volvo	
1974	Monty Carlo	
1999	Dodge Dakota	
1988	Ford	Gas

### Spokane

Year	Make	GAS/Diesel
1995	Nissan Quest	Gas
1976	Buick & Chrysler Van	Gas
1993 & 1979	Festiva Colt	
1992 & 1989	Camaro Chevy Minivan	Gas
1991	Mazda Van	
1990 & 1991	Dodge 15 passenger Van Plymouth Voyager	Gas

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### Snohomish

Year	Make	GAS/Diesel
2002	Kia	Gas
1989	Subaru Wagon	Gas
1990	GMC Pickup	Gas
1999	Ford F3 Pickup	Diesel
1996	Ford Aerostar	Gas
1989	Mazda Pickup	
1997	Dodge Caravan	Gas
2000	Odyssey	
2002 & 1991	Chevy Tracker Toyota Corolla	Gas
Recent Model	Ford Taurus	Gas
1991	Toyota Corolla	

### Seattle

Year	Make	GAS/Diesel
1989	Toyota Truck Van (for Work)	
2001	Subaru Legacy Wagon	
1998	Ford Taurus	
1991	Ford Station wagon	
2002	Toyota Camry	
1997	Acura	
1998	Mercedes	
1986	Volkswagen Van	

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## Appendix C: Participant Profiles

### General Public Focus Groups

Tuesday, May 13, 2003, SEATTLE

	HOW OFTEN KEEP CAR IDLING	AGE	INCOME	GENDER
1	Sometimes	55-59	50-75K	Female
2	Most of time	65+	75-100K	Male
3	All of the time	45-49	30-50K	Female
4	Sometimes	65+	30-50K	Male
5	Sometimes	30-34	50-75K	Female
6	All the time	60-64	30-50K	Female
7	All the time	35-39	30-50K	Male
8	Most of Time	55-59	100K+	Male

MOSES LAKE: Wednesday, May 14, 6PM

	HOW OFTEN KEEP CAR IDLING	AGE	INCOME	GENDER
1	All the time	55-59	50-75K	Female
2	All the time	50-54	100K+	Female
3	Sometimes	65+	Under 30K	Female
4	Most of the time	21-24	30-50K	Female
5	Sometimes	35-39	Under 30K	Male
6	Most of the time	55-59	30-50K	Male
7	Most of time	50-54	30-50K	Male
8	All the time	45-49	50-75K	Female
9	Most of the time	25-29	Under 30K	Female
10	Most of the time	40-44	75-100K	Male

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### Parent Focus Groups

SNOHOMISH: Wednesday, May 14, 6PM

	HOW OFTEN KEEP CAR IDLING	GRADE CHILDREN ARE IN	SCHOOL KIDS ATTEND	AGE	INCOME	GENDER
1	Most of time	High School	Public	50-54	50-75K	Female
2	Sometimes	Elementary Middle	Public	40-44	50-75K	Female
3	Sometimes	Elementary	Public	40-44	100K+	Female
4	Most of time	High School	Public	50-54	50-75K	Male
5	Most of time	High School	Private	50-54	50-75K	Male
6	All the time	Middle	Public	50-54	100K+	Male
7	Most of time	High School	Public	50-54	50-75K	Female
8	All the time	High School	Public	40-44	50-75K	Female
9	All the time	Elementary	Private	40-44	75-100K	Female
10	All the time	High School	Public	60-64	50-75K	Male
11	All the time	Middle High School	Public	45-49	50-75K	Male

SPOKANE: Thursday, May 15, 6PM

	HOW OFTEN KEEP CAR IDLING	GRADE CHILDREN ARE IN	SCHOOL KIDS ATTEND	AGE	INCOME	GENDER
1	Most of time	Elementary Middle	Public	35 -39	30-49K	Male
2	Sometimes	Elementary	Public	40-44	30-49K	Male
3	Most of time	Elem/Mid/High	Public	35-49	50-74K	Female
4	Sometimes	High School	Public	35-49	30-49K	Female
5	Sometimes	Elementary	Public	30-34	30-49K	Female
6						Female

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## Appendix D: Discussion Guide and Worksheets

### Idling Focus Groups

#### General Public Moderator Guide

May 13 (Seattle) and May 14 (Moses Lake)

#### Introduction (10 minutes)

- [Moderator introduces herself/himself.]
- [Explain:] A focus group is a group discussion where we can learn more in-depth about peoples' ideas and opinions (compared to telephone or written surveys).
- My job is to facilitate the discussion and make sure that everyone has an opportunity to speak.
- [Mention facility, audio and video equipment (so I do not have to take notes), observers in separate room.]
- Housekeeping – Toilets and refreshments.
- [Mention ground rules.]
- There are no right or wrong answers; we're interested in your honest and candid opinions and ideas.
- One person speaks at a time. This will allow all of us to be heard by each other and by the recording equipment.
- It is important to tell YOUR thoughts, not what you think others will think, or what you think others want to hear.
- Your ideas and opinions will be kept confidential.
- Your stipend will be provided as you leave.
- Relax and enjoy.
- Any questions about the purpose of our focus group or the ground rules before we begin?
- I'd like you each to introduce yourselves. Please tell us the following 3 things: (Post the questions on a flip chart)
- Your name
- What kind of car you drive, year, and is it gas or diesel.
- To what location do you drive most frequently that's NOT a job or the grocery store.

#### Air Quality (10 minutes)

1. Where does air quality rank in your concerns about your world? Why is that? (Probe for what is more important than air quality and why?)
2. Which of the following do you have at your home?
  - Fire place
  - Wood burning stove
  - Fire pit
  - Charcoal barbecue
  - Burn barrel
  - Gas lawn mower
  - Gas powered lawn tools (such as weed eater/leaf blower etc.)
3. Who do you believe is most responsible for air quality? Why is that?

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4. What behavior could you do that would most impact air quality?

### Car Idling Behavior (15 minutes)

5. How many separate trips do you make, on average, every day in your car?
6. When you hear the term "vehicle idling" – what do you think I mean?
7. When was the last time (other than at a stop light/sign) you idled your vehicle?  
Where and why did you idle it?
8. When/where else do you think you usually idle your vehicle? (Probe for when warming up vehicle engine in morning, going through drive-throughs, park and rides, at the dry cleaners, picking up pizza, picking kids up at school, waiting to get on/off the ferry, bridges, etc.)
9. Are there certain situations where you're more likely to idle your vehicle than others? What are these? (Probe for idling during very cold or very hot weather, when it's raining.)
10. Have you ever shut your vehicle off while waiting? What was the situation and how long before you turned it off?

### Awareness of Idling Issue (15 minutes)

11. I am now going to ask that you fill out a form – Please answer True/False for each statement.
  - Idling an engine uses less fuel than restarting it.
  - Idling doesn't produce unnecessary pollution.
  - It is easier on the vehicle starter to let it idle.
  - Turning off the engine would save significantly on gas costs.
  - Turning off the engine would be the right thing to do.
  - Idling is important to warm the engine.
12. Can you think of reasons that idling could be considered bad?
13. Does restarting your car use more fuel than letting it idle? (Probe for where they learned this idea.) How long do you think you can let your car idle before the idling uses more fuel than is used to restart your car?
14. Is it harmful to your car to turn it on and off?
15. Is it important to warm up your vehicle for a period of time before driving it? Why is that? For how long do you think you need to "warm it up?" Where did you learn about the need to warm up your vehicle engine?
16. Do you think vehicle idling contributes much to overall air quality problems? If so, in what way?
17. What percent of overall air pollution do you think is contributed by vehicle idling?

### Barriers to Behavior Change (15 minutes)

18. How likely are you to change your idling behavior? Why is that?
19. Under what circumstance are you most likely to change your vehicle idling behavior? Why is that?
20. Under what circumstances are you most likely to continue to idle your vehicle? Why is that?

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21. What would it take to get you to stop idling your vehicle even under those circumstances?

### **Motivators to Change Idling Behavior (15 minutes)**

22. What kind of information would be most influential in changing your vehicle idling ideas and behaviors? Where would you want to get this information? (Probe for signage, newspapers, websites, pamphlets, radio spots, etc.)

23. What would I need to tell you to get you to say today that you would never idle your car again? What would be so compelling to you that you would make that commitment?

24. Why do you think other people idle their vehicles?

25. Let's think about not just changing your behavior, but let's think about changing people's vehicle idling behavior on a larger scale. How do you think this could be best done?

26. What do you think would motivate most people to change their vehicle idling behavior?

CHECK WITH OBSERVERS TO SEE IF THEY HAVE ANY OTHER QUESTIONS THEY WANT ASKED AT THIS POINT.

### **Motivator Testing (15 minutes)**

27. Now I'd like to show you some potential motivators. (Show on flip chart). What do you think of these? Which would be most motivating to get you to change your idling behavior? Why is that? Which are not motivating? Why is that?

- Preserve our air for future generations.
- Not idling will improve fuel consumption.
- Not idling will save money.
- Not idling will reduce emissions.
- Not idling will help you breathe easier.
- Not idling will ensure your child is healthier.
- Idling at school is extremely dangerous to you child's health.
- One car, in one month can put out three pounds of emissions just dropping off a child at school.
- Child Asthma is on the rise and there is a direct link to air quality.
- Not idling will help protect the environment.
- Not idling will extend the life of your car.

### **Message Concept Testing (20 minutes)**

28. Now I'd like to show you some potential message concepts. [Present the message concepts on a ranking form (also put on flip chart). Ask them to rank each concept in regard to how much they like it, with a 1 being the one they like the best, etc. Give them 5 minutes to do this. Then open it up to discussion. Focus discussion on the top 2 or 3 ranked concepts and why they liked them.]

- Do your air share
- For clean air – turn left here
- The great switch off

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- You burn it, you breathe it
- Turn it off
- Spare the air
- For our health
- For our air
- Breathe easier

## **What other message concepts would you suggest?**

OTHER AREAS OF POTENTIAL INTEREST (if time permits)

- What are the top five factors of purchasing a car?
- Do you top off your fuel tank when buying gas? Why?
- Do you check your tire pressure? If so how often?

## **Wrap Up (3 minutes)**

CHECK WITH OBSERVERS TO SEE IF THEY HAVE ANY OTHER QUESTIONS THEY WANT ASKED. Any other comments that you would like me to pass on to our client concerning vehicle idling? Thank you very much for your time and insights.

## **Idling Focus Groups**

### **Parent Public Moderator Guide**

May 15 (Snohomish) and May 15 (Spokane)

#### **Introduction (10 minutes)**

- [Moderator introduces herself/himself.]
- [Explain:] A focus group is a group discussion where we can learn more in-depth about peoples' ideas and opinions (compared to telephone or written surveys).
- My job is to facilitate the discussion and make sure that everyone has an opportunity to speak.
- [Mention facility, audio and video equipment (so I do not have to take notes), observers in separate room.]
- Housekeeping – Toilets and refreshments.
- [Mention ground rules.]
- There are no right or wrong answers; we're interested in your honest and candid opinions and ideas.
- One person speaks at a time. This will allow all of us to be heard by each other and by the recording equipment.
- It is important to tell YOUR thoughts, not what you think others will think, or what you think others want to hear.
- Your ideas and opinions will be kept confidential.
- Your stipend will be provided as you leave.
- Relax and enjoy.
- Any questions about the purpose of our focus group or the ground rules before we begin?
- I'd like you each to introduce yourselves. Please tell us the following 4 things (post the questions on a flip chart):

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- Your name
- Gender and grade of your school-age children
- If children go to public or private schools
- What kind of car you drive, what year is it and is it gas or diesel
- To what location do you drive most frequently that's NOT a job or the grocery store

## **Air Quality (10 minutes)**

1. Where does air quality rank in your concerns about your world? Why is that? (Probe for what is more important than air quality and why?)
2. Which of the following do you have at your home?
  - Fire place
  - Wood burning stove
  - Fire pit
  - Charcoal barbecue
  - Burn barrel
  - Gas lawn mower
  - Gas powered lawn tools (such as weed eater/leaf blower etc.)
3. Who do you believe is most responsible for air quality? Why is that?
4. What behavior could you do that would most impact air quality?

## **Car Idling Behavior (15 minutes)**

5. How many separate trips do make, on average, every day in your car?
6. When you hear the term "vehicle idling" – what do you think I mean?
7. When was the last time (other than at a stoplight/sign) you idled your vehicle? Where and why did you idle it?
8. When/where else do you think you usually idle your vehicle? (Probe for when warming up vehicle engine in morning, going through drive-throughs, park and rides, at the dry cleaners, picking up pizza, picking kids up at school, waiting to get on/off the ferry, bridges, etc.)
9. Are there certain situations where you're more likely to idle your vehicle than others? What are these? (Probe for idling during very cold or very hot weather, or when it's raining.)
10. What about when picking up your children at school? About how many days a week do you pick them up at school?
11. About how many of those days do you keep your vehicle idling while waiting to pick them up?
12. For about how long do you keep your vehicle idling most times when picking up your children at school?
13. Is this after school or after school activities or both?
14. Do you find that it is different at different times of the year (winter vs. summer)?

## **Awareness of Idling Issue (15 minutes)**

I am now going to ask that you fill out a form. Please answer True/False for each statement.

- Idling an engine uses less fuel than restarting it.
- Idling doesn't produce unnecessary pollution.

## Dare to Care About the Air

- It is easier on the vehicle starter to let it idle.
  - Turning off the engine would save significantly on gas costs.
  - Turning off the engine would be the right thing to do.
  - Idling is important to warm the engine.
15. Can you think of reasons that idling could be considered bad?
  16. Does restarting your car use more fuel than letting it idle? (Probe for where they learned this idea.) How long do you think you can let your car idle before the idling uses more fuel than is used to restart your car?
  17. Is it harmful to your car to turn it on and off?
  18. Is it important to warm up your vehicle for a period of time before driving it? Why is that? For how long do you think you need to "warm it up?" Where did you learn about the need to warm up your vehicle engine?
  19. Do you think vehicle idling contributes much to overall air quality problems? If so, in what way?
  20. What percent of overall air pollution do you think is contributed by vehicle idling?

### **Barriers to Behavior Change (10 minutes)**

21. How likely are you to change your idling behavior when picking up your children at school? Why is that?
22. Under what circumstances are you most likely to continue to idle your vehicle when picking up your children at school? Why is that?

### **Motivators to Change Idling Behavior (20 minutes)**

23. Thinking of when you are most likely to continue idling your vehicle when picking up your children at school, can you think of alternatives that would still meet your needs?
24. What would you need to know that was so compelling that you would NEVER let your car idle when picking up your children at school? Why is that?
25. What kind of information would be most influential in changing your vehicle idling ideas and behaviors? From what source would you want to get this information? (Probe for newspapers, websites, pamphlets, school, DOE, doctor, air quality organization, environmental group like Sierra Club.)
26. Let's think about not just changing your behavior, but let's think about changing other parents' vehicle idling behavior when they pick up their children at school. How do you think this could be best done?
27. What do you think would motivate most parents to change their vehicle idling behavior when picking up their children at school?
28. If you saw a sign at the school drop off zone that said 'NO IDLE ZONE" how would you respond?
29. What if the school made it a mandatory behavior?
30. Would you sign a pledge today that said you promise not to idle your car for more than 30 seconds at a school zone? Why or why not? What would it take?

CHECK WITH OBSERVERS TO SEE IF THEY HAVE ANY OTHER QUESTIONS THEY WANT ASKED AT THIS POINT.

# Dare to Care About the Air

## Motivator Testing (15 minutes)

31. Now I'd like to show you some potential motivators (show on flip chart). What do you think of these? Which would be most motivating to get you to change your idling behavior? Why is that? Which are not motivating? Why is that?

- Preserve our air for future generations.
- Not idling will improve fuel consumption.
- Not idling will save money.
- Not idling will reduce emissions.
- Not idling will help you breathe easier.
- Not idling will ensure your child is healthier.
- Idling at school is extremely dangerous to you child's health.
- One car, in one month can put out three pounds of emissions just dropping off a child at school.
- Child asthma is on the rise and there is a direct link to air quality.
- Not idling will help protect the environment.
- Not idling will extend the life of your car.

## Message Concept Testing (20 minutes)

32. Now I'd like to show you some potential message concepts. [Present the message concepts on a ranking form (also put on flip chart). Ask them to rank each concept in regard to how much they like it, with a 1 being the one they like the best, etc. Give them 5 minutes to do this. Then open it up to discussion. Focus discussion on the top 2 or 3 ranked concepts and why they liked them.]

- Do your air share
- For clean air—turn left here
- The great switch off
- You Burn it, you breathe it
- Turn it off
- Spare the air
- For our health
- For our air
- Breathe easier

## What Other Message Concepts Would You Suggest?

OTHER AREAS OF POTENTIAL INTEREST – If time permits

- What are the top five factors of purchasing a car?
- Do you top off your fuel tank when buying gas? Why?
- Do you check your tire pressure? If so, how often?

## Wrap Up (3 minutes)

CHECK WITH OBSERVERS TO SEE IF THEY HAVE ANY OTHER QUESTIONS THEY WANT ASKED. Any other comments that you would like me to pass on to our client concerning vehicle idling? Thank you very much for your time and insights.

## Dare to Care About the Air

Focus group location \_\_\_\_\_ Date \_\_\_\_\_

Answer True or False for each item below.

- \_\_\_\_\_ Idling an engine uses less fuel than restarting it.
- \_\_\_\_\_ Idling doesn't produce unnecessary pollution.
- \_\_\_\_\_ It is easier on the vehicle starter to let it idle.
- \_\_\_\_\_ Turning off the engine would save significantly on gas costs.
- \_\_\_\_\_ Turning off the engine would be the right thing to do.
- \_\_\_\_\_ Idling is important to warm the engine.

Focus group location \_\_\_\_\_ Date \_\_\_\_\_

Rank order the following message concepts with a 1 being the one you like the most, a 2 being the one you like next, and so on.

- \_\_\_\_\_ Do your air share
- \_\_\_\_\_ For clean air—turn left here
- \_\_\_\_\_ The great switch off
- \_\_\_\_\_ You burn it, you breathe it
- \_\_\_\_\_ Turn it off
- \_\_\_\_\_ Spare the air
- \_\_\_\_\_ For our health
- \_\_\_\_\_ For our air
- \_\_\_\_\_ Breathe easier