

Burlington reluctant to enforce idling restrictions

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Thou shalt not idle: Well, at least in principle. The city of Burlington implemented a more stringent anti-idling ordinance this year to curb harmful [vehicle](#) exhaust, but strict enforcement of the law appears to be absent. Since January, only seven tickets have been issued.

"We'd like to emphasize right now our primary method of enforcement is education, a discussion of the violation," said John King, parking enforcement manager for the Burlington Police Department.

Largely through the urging of several statewide environmental groups, Burlington enacted the revised anti-idling ordinance Dec. 31, cutting the allowed idling time for [vehicles](#) from five minutes to three minutes and eliminating the winter exemption.

Exceptions are made for vehicles running refrigeration units or during temperatures below freezing.

The fine for violators is \$12, the same as for parking-meter violations. Of the seven tickets issued since Jan. 1, only two have been paid. Two of the tickets were "warning tickets," said King -- notices of violation that carry no fine.

King said that in most cases, officers speak with idlers about the dangers of exhaust [emissions](#) and leave the scene without issuing a fine.

"The end result should be cooperation and reduction of pollution," he said. "We feel that's primarily achieved through education and cooperation, not a fine."

In situations where tickets are issued, violators can come into the police department to discuss their wrong-doing and may leave with a clean slate without paying a fine.

"Even if the actual ticket were issued and the person came in and listened to the dangers of pollution, we would void that with the understanding of future cooperation," King said.

Jennifer Green, is co-director of the Burlington Legacy Project, the city-run community planning organization that spearheaded the revised idling ordinance. Green thinks enforcement is necessary.

"There's no point in having a law if you can't enforce it. We have a law that needs to be enforced," she said.

Green said she understands the numerous demands placed on the police department, but hopes that parking officers will keep a lookout in "problem spots" where vehicles are prone to idle, such as loading docks for trucks and rest areas for tour [buses](#).

Green agrees a large part of eliminating idling is education. "Because you can't see air pollution, it's really hard to rally support behind fighting it.

"It will take education and enforcement together to make sure our air quality improves," Green said.