



# Vehicle Idling Action Events: Best Practice Guidance for Businesses





## Foreword

Awareness about air quality and how it affects our health has been rising dramatically in the last year. Many local residents, hospitals, schools and businesses rightly want to take action on idling, which is an unnecessary source of air pollution. In fact, many people are already trying to convince drivers to switch off when parked on the street where they live, or near their place of work.

A great way to take action on idling is by holding an idling event, which brings together members of staff who are keen to improve local air quality. After being trained up to be Idling Action champions, your volunteers will then be confident to engage with drivers who are idling their engines, educate them about the impact of pollution on human health, and encourage them to switch off now and in the future.

Idling action events were originally pioneered by City of London Corporation, and were then rolled out to several local authorities across London through the Mayor of London funded [Vehicle Idling Action campaign](#). Over 80% of drivers switched off when asked during the first 6 months of the London-wide campaign, and research by King's College London has shown that these types of events really can decrease pollution levels in a certain area<sup>1</sup>.

We hope this best practice guidance and toolkit will provide businesses with some useful advice and tools to deliver their own events.

This guidance has been written by Cool World Consulting – the lead contractor for the delivery of the events for the Vehicle Idling Action campaign in London – in collaboration with the participating local authorities.

The London Vehicle Idling Action Campaign team

<http://idlingaction.london/>

@idlingaction

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<sup>1</sup> Research conducted by King's College London for Cleaner Air Better Business – Cleaner Air Action Fortnight  
<https://crossriverpartnership.org/media/2016/08/CABB-Cleaner-Air-Action-Fortnight1.pdf>



## What is an idling action event?

The London Vehicle Idling Action business events tend to last between 1.5 to 2 hours, and usually focus on the area around the business, or at a nearby school or hospital. The event is usually preceded by a training session (or short briefing about the event if volunteers have already been trained). Pairs of volunteers then go out into the streets wearing high vis vests, and engage with drivers who are idling while parked for a minute or more, and politely ask them to switch off to help improve local air quality. After speaking to the drivers, volunteers record the details of their interactions, and report back at the de-brief at the end of the event. Some volunteers also like to engage with drivers who have already switched off, thank them for doing so and explain to them why switching off is important.

For some volunteers, the action event will be the first time they've approached members of the public in their vehicles – which can be a daunting task – so clear health and safety guidance and informative volunteer training sessions are required (in advance of the event) to make sure everyone understands the task in hand, how to be effective talking to a driver in a short amount of time, and how to stay safe at an event.





## What do I need to do to run an idling event?

Here is a summary of the different stages of planning and hosting an event. Help, guidance and some suggested resources on each of these stages can be found in this best practice document.





1

- Recruit some enthusiastic volunteers.

If the business has an environmental group, proposing the idea of the event to the group and inviting them to be involved would be a great first step to recruiting volunteers. Other teams that could be involved and invited to volunteer are the facilities team, environmental / sustainability / energy managers, comms and PR teams, and security team.

The more advance notice of the event you can give, the better. You could help to promote the event and the volunteering opportunity by:

- Putting up posters on staff noticeboards (see poster in this toolkit);
- Emailing staff, and perhaps writing an article before / after the event for newsletters / intranets;
- Running a staff lunchtime training session in advance of the event;
- Ensuring that staff participation is recognised by the company volunteer programme (if the company has such a programme).
- Raise awareness with contractors – such as construction / building management companies who may have staff who would like to volunteer;
- Using social media platforms used by the company (such as twitter); and
- Letting local Tenant and Resident Associations know about the event, if there are residents in the area that are concerned about air pollution.

## Tips

- Securing senior management buy-in at the outset is helpful in terms of staff being allowed and encouraged to take part in the event.
- Most volunteers say that the reason they wanted to volunteer is to improve local air quality, so it's worth making that aim clear in your volunteer recruitment emails that you send out.
- Make it nice and simple for volunteers to sign up – by providing a contact email and responding promptly, or providing a webform (using tools such as google forms) which captures their details and alerts you when it has been completed.
- It's a good idea to send a welcome email to new volunteers within a couple of days of the volunteer signing up, to thank them for getting in contact and letting them know what the next steps will be.

## Email text

This is the kind of message that you might want to send out by email to recruit staff volunteers:

*We are looking for volunteers who would like to take part in a 'no idling' event. The aim of the event is to encourage drivers who are parked in the local area for a minute or longer to switch off their engine, so that they don't create unnecessary air pollution.*



### **Why would a no idling event be a good idea?**

*Idling (leaving your engine running while parked) is an unnecessary source of pollution, and research by King's College London has shown that these events can make an impact on air pollution levels.<sup>2</sup>*

*We have noticed that some people idle their engines while parked in the streets in this area. We would like to try and positively engage with these drivers and encourage them to switch off their engines when parked, to help reduce air pollution which is harmful to health.*

### **What will volunteering involve?**

*Volunteers will receive training (30 mins – 1 hour) prior to the event where they will learn about idling, air pollution and how it impacts on health. Advice will be given on how to approach drivers, how to be persuasive in a short amount of time, and how to respond to drivers' possible reasons for idling.*

*The idling event will 1.5 - 2 hours. At the event, pairs of volunteers will be hitting the streets in order to engage with drivers and ask them to switch off their engines to help to improve local air quality. Many drivers simply do not realise that idling is bad for air pollution so a positive and constructive engagement approach tends to be effective. The vast majority of drivers are very willing to switch off when encouraged to do so, and pledge not to idle in the future.*

*If you'd like to get involved in these events, please contact XXXXXXXX.*

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<sup>2</sup> <https://crossriverpartnership.org/media/2016/08/CABB-Cleaner-Air-Action-Fortnight1.pdf>

2 • Create engaging campaign materials

Campaign materials – such as leaflets, event banners, vehicle window stickers and posters – could be created to raise awareness about the aims of the event. The Vehicle Idling Action Campaign has created a suite of materials. PDFs of some of the action event campaign materials can be found in this toolkit, including:

- An information leaflet which can be handed out to drivers and passers-by. The leaflet acts as a myth-buster for many of the excuses that drivers give for idling, and it explains how switching off your engine could help to improve local air quality.
- Window stickers which can be given out to drivers, and put in vehicle / business building windows.
- Posters with differing taglines and calls to action which can be put up around the business premises to advertise events and recruit volunteers.
- Campaign logos which can be applied to high vis vest designs, which the volunteers could wear at events. There are various companies that can be found on the internet that allow you to design and order vests online.

Other campaign materials that could be created include key fobs, air fresheners, pencils / pens.





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### •Develop training tools

Once recruited, volunteers will need to receive training that will enable them to be effective in their roles – and stay safe!

A volunteer training session could be held before the action event or on the event day. We have found that a one-hour session works well. This is an opportunity for the volunteers to learn about air quality, find out more about the campaign and share expectations. It is also an opportunity to remind volunteers that the event is about positive engagement, and not about enforcement.

For the London Vehicle Idling Action campaign, all volunteers are required to be trained before attending an event. We have developed an online training video that can be used to train volunteers and this may provide you with some ideas for your own training session. It can be viewed at: <http://idlingaction.london/vtraining/>. The training covers the following topics:

- Air quality and health, and how research has shown that idling can impact on air quality (useful facts are also contained on the FAQs sheet in the volunteer pack);
- Behaviour change skills – how to be persuasive in a short amount of time and convince drivers to switch off;
- Health and safety guidance – how to talk to drivers and stay safe at the event; and
- A run through the 'myth buster' (contained on the leaflet) which can be used to convince drivers to switch off.

If time allows, a role play session could also be included where volunteers can practise speaking to a driver and convincing them to switch off. Please see the Volunteer Pack for advice on how to approach drivers (in the Code of Conduct and Health & Safety section), and the FAQs which suggest which drivers should not be approached and why.

All volunteers could be emailed a Volunteer Pack in advance of attending an event (sample volunteer pack available to download in this toolkit), which includes a sample script for talking to drivers, FAQs, and advice on using social media. The sample volunteer pack contains a link to the online training video. This could be included in the email to volunteers, and they could be asked to watch the video in advance of attending the event.



### **Approach and messaging**

Drivers are approached in a friendly and non-judgemental way. They are asked to help improve local air quality by switching off their engines when parked for more than a minute. Drivers are given some facts about the health impacts of idling and air pollution.

- 96% of volunteers think this approach is effective.
- Over 80% of drivers switch off when approached this way.



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•Create the tools that will be used at the events

The kind of tools that might be used by you and your volunteers at the events are provided in the toolkit, and include:

- **Idling data log** – a simple, printed excel spreadsheet that volunteers will fill in after their interaction with the driver. They will note down information that will help you to evaluate your events. For example, you will probably want volunteers to record the type of vehicle the driver was in, whether they were idling or not, whether they switched off or not. It is also worth emphasising the importance of noting down other information, such as comments from the driver (such as positive feedback or reasons why they were idling). If you would like to offer your volunteers the option of using an online idling recording form, which they complete using their smart phone, you could create a webform using products such as Typeform or Survey Monkey. Volunteers can be emailed the link to the form before the event.
- **Photo permission form** – this is a form that can be filled in by volunteers, drivers and members of the public to grant permission to use a photo of them for promotional purposes (i.e. website, newsletters, twitter).
- **Code of Conduct & Health and Safety form** – volunteers will need to read this before they go out on an event, and sign to confirm they have understood the information. It gives useful information about how to talk to drivers, and how to stay safe during an event.

These tools could be explained at the training session, and again at the pre-event briefing.

### Event risk assessment

A risk assessment should be completed by the event host before each event. Any potential risks will be identified and explanation given about how the risks have been mitigated. Guidance on putting together a risk assessment can be found in the Event Leader Pack. The organisation's health and safety team should be consulted, to ensure the risk assessment is in line with internal policies and procedures.



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•Decide on appropriate locations for idling events

There are several things to bear in mind when planning your event:

- **Location** – high numbers of idlers tend to be found in places where there are lots of drop-offs and pick-ups, such as near shops (where there are often early morning deliveries), outside schools (at school pick-up time), near hospitals and other public buildings, and in town centres. These all tend to be good locations for idling action events.
- **Time of day** – early morning and school pick-up time tend to be the busiest for idlers. Lunchtime can also be a popular idling time in areas where lots of deliveries are made, and delivery drivers take a break in their vehicles. We have found that lunchtime events to be more popular with staff, as they can attend the event over their lunch hour.
- **Duration** – most events last around 2 hours, although businesses may decide that a shorter event (between 1 and 1.5 hours) is more realistic for staff with busy workloads.

6 • Advertise the event

Once you've recruited your volunteers and decided on the event date and timings, it's time to advertise your event to the staff volunteers.

The first step is to email all volunteers and give them as much advance warning about the event as possible (ideally at least 4 weeks). In the email, it is a good idea to ask volunteers to confirm if they will be attending, so that you know how many to expect. However, you may find some drop out on the day, and some volunteers may turn up unannounced.

Posters (included in the toolkit) can be put up in staff and noticeboards, to let people know about the event invite them to get in touch if they'd like to get involved.

Another useful way to advertise the event is via twitter. your press team to tweet about the event several times the event and let people know who to contact if they like to get involved.



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Ask before would

 **Idling Action @idlingaction** · Mar 29  
If you're in #Clapham today, join us from 12-2pm by the common paddling pool to promote #noIDLing: [ow.ly/Cvws30adAe0](https://ow.ly/Cvws30adAe0) @lambeth\_council



 **Idling Action @idlingaction** · Mar 27  
Switch off your engine & join us at Latimer Rd Tube tomorrow 2-3.30pm to promote #noIDLing in #RBKC: [ow.ly/glax30ahE3p](https://ow.ly/glax30ahE3p) @baokborwick RT





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• Deliver the training and action events

## Pre-event communication

A day or so before the event, all volunteers could be emailed with the:

- **Volunteer pack;**
- **Weather forecast** and recommendations on bringing appropriate footwear and clothing;
- **Exact meeting time and location** (address and map are helpful), and advice on planning their journey; and
- **Contact number** of the event leader in case they are running late.

The event leader should conduct a risk assessment for the event in advance and make plans to mitigate any potential risks (see risk assessment guidance in the Event Leader Pack).

## The Event

The event itself could consist of a training session (or pre-event briefing if training was done on a different day), the action event, and a de-brief. Each of these is explained in more detail below.

See the Event Leader Pack and Volunteer Pack for supporting information.

### *Training session*

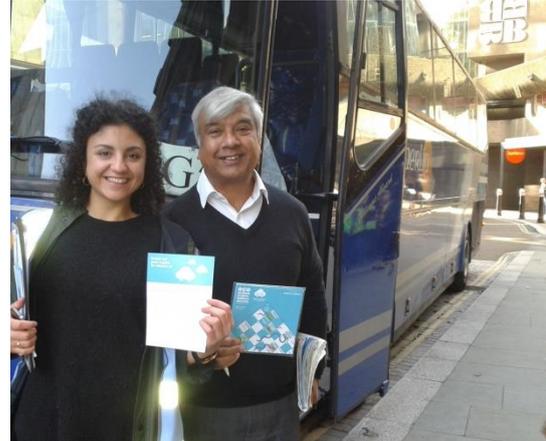
We have found that higher numbers of volunteers attend the events when the training session immediately precedes the action event. However if that is not possible, you could hold the training session a few days / weeks before (or even just ask staff to watch the online training video), and do a quick re-cap of the main elements of the training at the pre-event briefing.

Section 3 'Develop Training Tools' gives advice on the potential format and contents of a training session, and provides a link to our online training video.

### *Pre-event briefing:*

- Explain / re-cap the aims and objectives of the event – to encourage drivers to switch off when parked for a minute, to help improve local air quality.
- Remind volunteers that positive engagement techniques should be used with drivers.
- Run through the health and safety issues with volunteers, and ensure they have all signed a health and safety form before taking part in the event (example included in the Volunteer Pack).
- All volunteers should go out in pairs. If possible, pair up new (or less confident) volunteers with a more experienced (or more confident) volunteers.

- Hand out volunteer clipboards, high vis vests and campaign materials, and ensure everyone understands how to fill in the idling log.
- Volunteers need to be clear about which types of vehicles not to approach e.g. elderly drivers on a cold day, taxis on rank.
- Ensure all volunteers understand that they should not take photos of children unless they have signed permission granted by the parent of the child. It may be simpler to only take photos of adults who grant permission for their photo to be taken, and to avoid taking photos of children altogether.
- Assign volunteers a specific area to target, and ensure everyone knows when and where to meet at the end of the event.
- Give out the phone number for the event leader in case of an emergency, and note down the names and mobile numbers of all volunteers.
- Ask all volunteers if they would be happy to be in photos that could be used for promotional purposes (e.g. on websites or social media). If so, they should sign a photo permission form. You could take a group photo which can be 'tweeted' (subject to volunteer agreement), featuring all volunteers who are happy to appear in photos.



### **At the event:**

- It's a good idea for the event host to carry the risk assessment form with them throughout the event.
- Pairs could go out and talk to drivers who are idling for a minute or longer, and hand out leaflets or other campaign materials to the people who they interact with. We have also found that it can be rewarding for the volunteers to engage with – and thank – drivers who have already switched off.
- Volunteers could ask drivers if they would be happy to have their photo taken for the campaign. If the driver is obliging, they need to sign a photo permission form. The volunteer should take care to ensure that, if it's a company vehicle, the company name is not visible in the photo.
- Pairs could record all interactions on their idling data logs (example included in Event Leader Pack).
- The sample Code of Conduct and Health and Safety form (in the Event Leader Pack) provides an overview of what the volunteers could do during their engagement with drivers.
- Events could have a central location where a stand is set up displaying the posters and campaign materials, such as in the business reception area or in a public square (although permission from the land owner / manager will need to be sought).



- Tweet about the event and include photos if you have signed permission from the people who appear in the photo – see example tweet below.



### At the de-brief after the event

- Check all volunteers have returned. If any have not returned at the agreed time, call their mobile to check they are coming back.
- Thank volunteers for taking part and ask how they found it – volunteers really like to share their stories. Let volunteers know about the next event.
- Collect all idling data logs and photograph permission forms.
- Remind volunteers to tweet about the event / retweet your tweets.
- Having refreshments available at the briefing / de-brief always seems to go down well.



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- Follow up on any issues that arose and report back to volunteers

After the event, the following tasks are usually undertaken:

- Input all idling data into a spreadsheet and analyse results e.g. % of drivers that switched off.
- Email all volunteers to thank them for coming, let them know the statistics from the event, and remind them about the next event (if there will be one). You could also draft some text for business newsletters and websites.
- Follow up on any issues that arose at the event. For example, some queries may have arisen at the event that you were unable to answer at the time (such as parking rules, exemptions from idling regulations), and once you've found out the answer, you could share that with the volunteers.
- Ensure the volunteer health and safety forms and photograph permission forms data are stored and managed in accordance with data protection requirements.



## Tips for a successful campaign

After the first six months of the Vehicle Idling Action campaign events in London, we evaluated the campaign. Here are some useful lessons learned that we hope may help you with your campaign.

- Teamwork is essential - the most successful events have a good mix of volunteers – such as business staff, contractors, local authority employees or resident volunteers.
- Setting up a central stand or focus area with banners and campaign collateral can help to attract attention of passers-by and increase the number of people you engage with.
- Events with a training session followed immediately by an action event tend to attract higher numbers of volunteers (as opposed to having them on different days).
- After the event, follow up on idling issues that arose. For example, you may want to contact an organisation if several vehicles from that same company were idling.
- Ensure your data collection tools balance the need to be simple and easy to fill in, with the need for you to collect the data to evaluate the events. It's also a good idea to make a clear distinction between drivers who refuse to switch off, and those who are unable to switch off (e.g. for technical reasons) as this can often be a grey area.

## Volunteer quotes

*"I really enjoyed being part of the project – purposeful and fun."*

- Lambeth volunteer

*"Keep up the good work! Many people are simply unaware of the effect on air pollution. Some people will always be difficult but the minority, I hope."*

- Volunteer survey feedback – anonymous

## Case study: Idling Action event with Arup

One especially successful corporate event was with Arup, whose head office is in the Fitzrovia area. The project team minimised the amount of time staff would need to commit to the event in one chunk, as this was seen as a barrier to staff attending previous corporate events. The event was scheduled for lunchtime so staff could attend on their lunch break.

The week before the event, staff were emailed the campaign Volunteer Pack and the link to the online training video so that they could watch it the week before attending. On the day of the event, a short, 15-minute briefing was held at Arup's offices with teas and coffees. At the briefing, the event leader reminded all volunteers about how volunteers should engage with drivers (i.e. positive engagement, not enforcement), and reminded them of important health and safety guidance. All volunteers signed the health and safety forms before going out for the event.



Pairs of volunteers were then given high vis vests, clipboards and campaign materials, and they were sent out to the surrounding area to talk to drivers. Staff were told they could volunteer for as long as they were able (there was no minimum time commitment), and were asked to come to Whitfield Gardens when they finished, where a member of the Project Team and member of staff at Arup had set out the snakes and ladders game and engaged with passers-by, as well as several members of Arup staff, on their lunch breaks.

The event was well attended by Arup staff and community volunteers who are local residents, as well as several members of the project team and TfL. One Arup volunteer was especially effective in his role and succeeded in filling both sides of his idling log sheet, recording over 30 interactions in just over an hour.



This best practice guidance is used with thanks to the Vehicle Idling Action participating London Authorities and The Mayor of London.

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Produced by the Vehicle Idling Partnership in consultation with the participating local authorities.

<http://idlingaction.london/>

<https://twitter.com/idlingaction>