

SPREADING THE WORD ABOUT IDLE REDUCTION THROUGH FACEBOOK



SUGGESTIONS FOR USERS OF ALL LEVELS OF FACEBOOK EXPERTISE



Please follow MDE to stay connected and use #IdleFreeMD when adapting for and coordinating with Twitter and other social media platforms.

The following recommendations are intended to spread the word through social media about idling and its affect on Maryland communities. Everyone is encouraged to implement as few or as many of the suggestions as they feel comfortable with and adapt them for other social media outlets. Idle Free MD targets the following audiences:

Maryland Communities

- ◇ Motorists and pedestrians
- ◇ Community and neighborhood groups, associations and organizations
- ◇ Schools, parents and students

Motor Transportation Industry

- ◇ Trucking companies and other businesses with vehicle fleets
- ◇ Trucking and other motor transportation associations
- ◇ Truck drivers

mde.maryland.gov/idlefreeMD



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PLEDGE TO BE IDLE FREE.

For more information, contact mde.idlefreemd@maryland.gov



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COMMUNICATING THROUGH PAGE SETTINGS

You can promote internal or external idle reduction priorities through your personal, business or organization's Facebook page. For additional information on page settings, visit <https://www.facebook.com/help/255700674532721>.

- **Cover Page:** Demonstrate your commitment to idle reduction by uploading a [Facebook cover graphic](#) from mde.maryland.gov/idlefreeMD, or by creating one of your own.

Ideal cover graphic size is 1920 x 1080 pixels on a desktop. *Tip:* Only the central area of that image will be visible on a smart phone.

- **Create or Update Your Call to Action Button:** The call to action button associated with your cover image can drive traffic to a web site, prompt a phone call, play a video, solicit a response, or send a message. Coordinate the button with your new cover image by linking it to mde.maryland.gov/idlefreeMD or connecting it to internal resources that support your own idle reduction initiatives.

To create a call to action button, go to your web page, and click the button near the bottom of your cover image that says "Add a Button."

- **Place Tips:** You can provide a user-friendly experience to those who come to your place of business while informing them about your idle reduction policies during their visit. Include images and information from mde.maryland.gov/idlefreeMD in your Places options to promote your commitment to a broader audience and encourage visitors to not to idle in your parking lot.

To add and coordinate the Places option, go to the "About" section on your page and make sure you've included a complete address and your wifi network. A map will appear in the Address section when you click to edit it. Below the map, check the box next to "Show Map and Check-ins on the Page." Then go to your "Settings" and click on "Place Tips" on the left menu. For more information on Place Tips, visit <https://www.facebook.com/business/news/place-tips-for-businesses>.

POSTING WITH A PURPOSE

- **Target Your Audience:** Facebook provides many opportunities for developing relationships with audiences that are essential to Maryland's idle reduction efforts. Industries, interests and communities can be targeted by joining groups, following organizations and advertising to people, businesses and organizations that are a part of three key categories:

- ◊ **Families:** PTAs, schools, and community parent groups and listservs
- ◊ **Community:** Neighborhood associations, school district administrations, area business councils, and local government
- ◊ **Environmental and Public Health Organizations:** Green school programs, local ecology organizations, advocacy groups, government recreation and environment agencies, and non-government organizations.
- ◊ **Industry:** Trucking companies, businesses with vehicle fleets, motor transportation associations, truck drivers, truck stops, and travel plazas

Communicating with these groups about the importance of idle reduction can help your message fall on receptive ears and potentially increase exposure to new audiences.

- **Target Your Messaging:** To successfully achieve cleaner air through idle reduction, some messaging should be tailored to key groups.

Building Awareness: It's important that everyone is aware of how idling affects Maryland communities. [Information on the health, environmental and economic impact of idling](#) should be shared among all target audiences.



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- **Taking Steps Toward Cleaner Air:** Ways to approach idle reduction may vary across key audiences. Sharing information that is specific to [personal drivers](#), [professional drivers](#), [trucking industry managers](#), and [school communities](#) can help educate each of these audiences on steps they can take toward making a difference in idle reduction.
- **Posting Images:** Images garner more exposure and engagement than words alone. Viral-friendly graphics, photos and video can creatively promote your commitment to idle reduction while generating traffic to mde.maryland.gov/idlefreeMD.
 - ◇ **Idle Free MD infographics** available at mde.maryland.gov/idlefreeMD can help spread the word about idle reduction. A series of risk factor posts can build awareness about idling's impact on [children](#), [health](#), [carbon monoxide output](#), [engine performance](#), [fuel consumption](#), [waste, the environment](#), [the bay](#), and [marine life](#). Download and post these images using some of the tagging, linking and audience-targeting methods recommended.
 - ◇ **Photos of idle reduction efforts** celebrate those who adopt an idle free lifestyle and motivate others to do the same. Business owners signing the [Pledge to Be Idle Free](#), school bus drivers protecting young lungs, and students spearheading their own idle reduction efforts are all great ways to personalize efforts made in your community. Follow and tag [Maryland Department of Environment](#) (#IdleFreeMD) when posting so we can share your commitment to cleaner air with the larger Maryland community.

Tip: There are many options for posting images available to business and organizations. For example, the Photo Carousel option lets you post different messages with a series of images, each linking to a specific web page. It's a good option for consolidating complex sets of information in a concise and viral-friendly way. There are also options for animating images and attaching call to actions.

To access image options, go to your business' or organization's Facebook page and click on the "Share a photo or video" icon in your post options.

- **Driving Traffic to mde.maryland.gov/idlefreeMD:** The simplest way you can help spread the word about Idle Free MD is to share the website url. Paste mde.maryland.gov/idlefreeMD into your post message or link posted images to the site.
- **Promoting Idle Reduction Events:** Pledge-signing commitments and other idle reduction efforts can be very motivational when incorporated into planned events and gatherings. Facebook can help promote these events and increase attendance by sending reminders, posting updates, and collecting RSVPs. Depending on their settings, it may even add the event invitation to the digital calendars of those who are invited. There are several steps to follow to create an event that will garner higher exposure rates. Visit https://events.fb.com/#events_landing_hero on creative ways to do this effectively.

To create an event, go to the "..." icon on your page and select "Create an Event." Use a motivational image and include specifics on the location with an exact address. The "Keywords" form field will allow you to add words or phrases that will make your event search-engine friendly.

To invite people to your event, share the event on your timeline and invite friends and followers by going to the event post, clicking on the "invite" button, and either selecting specific people from your friends list, or choosing entire groups from the list to the left. Ask colleagues to do the same for added exposure.

To encourage interest in the event, add details as the event approaches such as catering information, speaker bios, images, and incentives. Consider distributing the resources available at mde.maryland.gov/idlefreeMD at your event and posting the images available. *Tip:* During the event, "check in" and post photos and comments on the event feed.



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- **Pinning Posts:** Timely posts about idle reduction can be pinned to the top of your page so that those who are seeking specific information can easily find it. Pinned posts can align with events on your editorial calendar or be used to divert visitors to a different forum for engaging about idle reduction. For instance, trucking companies may wish to pin a post that educates drivers on ways they can reduce idling while on the job, or educators can promote idle reduction protocols during drop off and pick up.

To pin a post, click on the caret on the upper right of the post, and select “Pin to Top.”

CREATING AN EDITORIAL CALENDAR TO HELP PROMOTE IDLE REDUCTION

An editorial calendar can help you plan posts about news, seasonal information, events, and emerging priorities that align with your idle reduction efforts. For instance, resources from mde.maryland.gov/idlefreeMD can help you remind communities about how idling effects young lungs at the beginning of a new school year, and monthly features can profile businesses or employees that are pledging to be idle free. Consider the following examples to help you create your own:

- **Monthly Events and Features**
 - ◊ Idle Free Champion of The Month
- **February**
 - ◊ Love the Bus Month
- **April**
 - ◊ National Healthy Schools Day
 - ◊ Earth Day
 - ◊ Air Quality Awareness Week
- **May**
 - ◊ Clean Air Month
 - ◊ Statewide Watershed Report Card
 - ◊ Bike to Work Day
 - ◊ MAEOE Annual Youth Summit
- **June**
 - ◊ Chesapeake Bay Awareness Week
- **July**
 - ◊ Maryland’s Annual PTA Convention
- **September**
 - ◊ Beginning of the School Year
- **October**
 - ◊ Children’s Health Month
 - ◊ Energy Efficiency Day
 - ◊ National School Bus Safety Week

ATTRACTING TARGET AUDIENCES

Once you have identified the key audiences that play an important role in improving air quality through idle reduction, you can take steps to include them in your social network.

- **Expanding Your Network:** Pay attention to whom others in those key communities are following, sharing and posting about. Read the electronic communications about idle reduction that make it to your inbox and look for a Facebook follow prompt. Follow the media sources, organizations and journalists who write about topics related to clean air. Then look to your desired target-audience list to help fill in any remaining gaps. For instance, to broaden your reach to involve more parents in your community, you can join groups like Baltimore City Kids (<https://www.facebook.com/groups/BaltimoreCityKids/>). To garner support from those who influence transportation policy, you can follow organizations like the Central Maryland Transportation Alliance (<https://www.facebook.com/CMTAlliance/>). To get support from environmental groups, you could engage with organizations like Sustainable Maryland (<https://www.facebook.com/SustainableMaryland/>).

Groups: Facebook Groups can help you connect with followers by type or interest. It’s a great way to target like-minded people about idle reduction. Joining groups for school bus industries, legislators, educators, parents, and communities can make it easier to promote the resources on mde.maryland.gov/idlefreeMD directly with the intended target audiences. *Tip:* By keeping the privacy settings for your group open, others in the group can invite members and the group can grow on its own.

For information on how to create a group and invite members, visit <https://www.facebook.com/help/167970719931213>. For information on group settings, visit <https://www.facebook.com/help/220336891328465>.



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- **Cross Promoting Your Page:** Include a hyperlink to your Facebook page on all digital media (emails, PDFs, websites, etc.) that you use to communicate about idle reduction.
- **Tagging:** Tagging key people, places and organizations in your posts will extend your reach—especially with those who have large followings. However, you need to be following the person or organization before you can tag them.

To tag others, key in the @symbol before you type the name of the person or organization you want to tag. Facebook will generate a search function for a tag. Once the proper name or organization appears in the suggestions, click on it to create the tag. *Tip:* Facebook can often recognize and suggest tagging a person, place or organization as you type their name in your post, but exact spelling counts.

- **Checking In:** Checking in is a great way to develop positive relationships with other businesses and organizations who support idle reduction. It extends your reach to a larger community while generating exposure for idle reduction efforts. For example, a parent or school administrator who wants to recognize drivers who wait for students with their engines turned off can do it in a post that checks in at the school. This will promote the sentiment to the entire school community.

To check in as an organization, make sure you have the Facebook App loaded on your mobile phone. Go to your organization's page, and click on the "..." icon. Select "Check In" from the drop-down menu. Some local places will appear in your feed. If the location you are at does not appear, type in the name of it to see if Facebook can locate it. Please note that while many locations have a Facebook presence, not all locations are identified on Facebook.

ENGAGEMENT

Engagement is a two-way street that requires both initiating conversations as well as joining the conversations of others. Making an effort to engage with others about air quality issues important to them can help build awareness of idling's impact on Maryland communities.

Tip: Followers in your business' or organization's Facebook community are separate from those in your personal account. Additional steps are needed to access and engage with that audience.

- **Inviting Others to the Conversation:** Make sure your business or organization is following other organizations already connected to its social network.

To Follow pages that are following you, go to your business' or organization's page, and go to "Settings" on the upper right menu bar. On the Settings page, click "People and Other Pages" in the menu to the left, then select "Pages that Like this Page" from the drop down menu at the top of the center column. Go to each of the key pages on that list, click on the "..." button, and select "like as your page" from the drop down menu. When you receive notifications that a new organization is following you, go to their page and like it in return.

- **Engaging Others:** Make a point of responding to related posts in your professional network about how Idle Free MD supports cleaner air, healthier lungs and a thriving Chesapeake Bay. Comment, share and like posts from others with common goals. Post resources from mde.maryland.gov/idlefreeMD in your comments to help to spread the word about idle reduction. To engage with others in your business' or organization's news feed, you must first access it instead of your personal news feed.

To view your organization's page feed, go to your organization's page, and click "See Pages Feed" on the menu to the right.



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Soliciting Engagement: Encourage others to join the conversation by asking a question or soliciting opinions about topics related to idle reduction. Challenge others to take the [Pledge to Be Idle Free](#) by asking them to post their commitment and share your post. Request images of other's idle reduction efforts and feedback on ways they are using the material on mde.maryland.gov/idlefreeMD.

Tip: Polls are a great way to generate interest in a topic and gather data. However, polls are currently only available to Facebook Groups. *To create a poll*, go to the group's page and access the option in the post field.