

**House Committee on Natural Resources and Energy  
January 22, 2010**

**H.97**

**Testimony of Don Ostler, Delivery Operations Manager, Green Mountain Coffee**

I will speak to four general areas and answer any questions you may have.

1. Driver Education – GMC success
2. Business Results
3. Motivation/Initiative to Reduce Idling
4. Cold Weather Fuel and Idling

**Driver Education**

Unnecessary engine idling came to my attention in 2004 when diesel prices went to \$ 3 / gallon. GMC was looking to improve fuel efficiency and we were measuring the effects of an aerodynamic device. I was using the engine control module (ECM) of the engine to track the fuel mileage. What caught my eye was the amount of idling our truck engines were doing and consequently the amount of fuel being used/wasted.

When I presented the data of the idling time and the fuel consumed for idling to the drivers they were surprised by the numbers. I questioned the drivers about why they let the engines idle. They responded with some myths about diesel engines, and the need for heating and cooling. The first myth was that diesel engines were more efficient when they are left running continuously, but in fact engine manufacturers state that idling damages engines. Another was that it takes more fuel to start the engine so it is left running. In fact the fuel used for starting the engine is the equivalent of idling for 30 seconds. I addressed the issue of warmth – the engine stays warm for quite a while after it reaches operating temperature so warm air will blow from the heater a minute after you re-start the engine. Regarding hot weather, the engine should never be used for cooling when the truck is unoccupied. When you return to the truck drive with the windows rolled down until the AC kicks in. We continued to talk about necessary versus unnecessary idling.

I presented a challenge to the drivers – reduce idling by 20 % in one year and save 1,000 gallons. Many drivers were skeptical; others resented being told how to drive their trucks. But the drivers from one regional operations center embraced the challenge. The results were tracked and posted monthly for the drivers. The successful location started to influence the others and the challenge was on. At the end of the first year our goals were exceeded and acknowledgement was given to the “low idlers”. During the ensuing years skeptics became advocates and competition among drivers and locations resulted in continued engine idling reduction. Drivers came back with stories about other companies’ delivery trucks idling and how those drivers just didn’t understand.

**Business Results – 23 Straight Trucks**

**2004** - Engine idling at 28% of runtime / 7,000 gallons consumed for idling / \$21,000 (\$3 / gal).

**2005** – Engine idling at 19.8% - a 29 % reduction / more than 2,000 gallons saved

**2009** – Engine idling at 3 % / fuel used for idling - 403 gallons

**Annual Results - 2009 compared to 2005**

- 6,800 gallons avoided - annually
- 152,000 lbs of CO2 avoided - annually
- \$20,000 saved – annually

Achieving these results has not had a negative impact on the performance of our drivers. In fact it is a source of pride within the delivery group because they are active participants in reducing GMC's carbon footprint.

**Motivation / Initiative**

Educating the driver is a must but the leadership of the organization must drive for results. We are fortunate at Green Mountain Coffee to have a culture that supports this effort. Other companies that reduce idling understand the economic and environmental impact of unnecessary engine idling. For those companies or drivers that do not recognize the value of reduced idling from an economic, social, health, or environmental standpoint, the passage and enforcement of H.97 will be the first step. The law and the publicity surrounding the law will also heighten the awareness of the general public about engine idling.

**Cold Weather Fuel and Idling**

A concern that is heard frequently is the "gelling" of diesel fuel during cold weather and therefore idling is necessary. The first fact to keep in mind is that diesel fuel gels at +20°F. So in order to use diesel fuel in the winter it needs to be treated to prevent gelling. Most fuel in the North Country is treated to -20°F. When using properly treated fuel, gelling will not be a problem except in extreme low temperatures. And additional treatment options poured directly into the fuel tanks are available during this time. What can be a problem is the water condensation that builds up in fuel tanks and mixes with the fuel. This may become frozen in filters and lines if the truck does not operate for an extended period of time. In most commercial trucks the fuel is circulated through the engine to pre-heat it. After the engine has been running for a while the fuel will retain heat so on-going idling throughout the day is unnecessary. When the truck sits overnight there is the potential for freezing but this can be alleviated by keeping the tanks full every night and using a fuel treatment added directly into the tanks when there is a concern about water build-up and freezing.

**In Summary**

- Education is the Key – for drivers and companies – **'You breathe what you idle'**
- Track the Results - acknowledge good performance
- Motivate – preferably through positive reinforcement and results
- Temperature exemptions are not necessary for properly blended fuel
- The passage of H.97 will provide the initiative to change behaviors

I have included two examples of the data that GMC uses to measure performance.

Respectfully,  
Don Ostler