

ALERT

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CLEAN SCHOOL BUS USA Mary Lee Hultin, M.S., R.S.

Today, almost 24 million children will climb onto a school bus on their way to or from school. School buses provide our children with safe, reliable transportation. However, besides providing a safe transportation option, buses can pose a threat to our children's lungs.

There are roughly 450,000 public school buses in the United States; 390,000 are powered by diesel fuel. Diesel exhaust contains particles that are very small and can easily be inhaled through the nose and mouth. These particles can then lodge themselves in the lungs triggering asthma and allergy symptoms. Gases are also emitted in diesel exhaust that are toxic to the lungs and add to air pollution. Children are very susceptible to air pollution because their lungs are still growing and their immune systems have not yet developed the full ability to force out pollutants. Children are more likely to play actively outdoors and have faster breathing rates than adults.

Clean School Bus USA is a program developed by the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) to help communities reduce pollution from school buses. The goal of Clean School Bus USA is to reduce both children's exposure to diesel exhaust and the amount of air pollution created by diesel school buses. The program emphasizes three ways to reduce public school bus pollution; anti-idling strategies, engine retrofits and clean fuels, and bus replacement.

Anti-Idling

Idling school buses pollute the air that our children breathe. Pollution gathers inside and outside of the bus. Diesel exhaust can also be sucked into the school's ventilation system. Bus drivers occasionally need to let their engines idle briefly to warm the engine or run certain bus equipment, but most idling is not necessary. Reducing idling is a simple, cost-effective way to help decrease exposure to exhaust.

Bus Retrofit

Another solution to diesel pollution is using retrofitted school buses. These buses are cleaner because they have been fitted with a device that reduces pollution or they may also use cleaner fuel. Ultra-low sulfur diesel or biodiesel fuel (a renewable fuel that can be made from new and used vegetable oils and fats) are a couple of options available to schools interested in retrofitting their bus fleets.

Replacement

Finally, schools can replace their older diesel buses for newer, less polluting buses.

About a third of all diesel school buses now in use were made before 1990. These older buses can emit almost six times more pollution than buses built after 2004. By replacing these buses, students, teachers and the whole community can benefit from cleaner air.

By working together with our families, community and schools, we can reduce pollution from public school buses and ensure a very clean way for children to get to school. If you would like more information about Clean School Bus USA, please visit, www.epa.gov/cleanschoolbus.



Mary Lee Hultin is a Toxicology Specialist with the Michigan Department of Environmental Quality (DEQ), Air Quality Division. Mary Lee serves as a technical specialist for the state's air toxics program focusing on children's environmental health, with a specialty in air quality and asthma.

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24 million children ride the school bus every day.



School buses drive more than 4 billion miles each year.



There are roughly 450,000 public school buses in the United States; 390,000 are powered by diesel fuel.

Source: Clean School Bus USA, 2006, U.S. Environmental Protection Agency



ASTHMA COALITION COLUMN



Focus on: The F.L.A.R.E. Plan

Did you know that for those dying from asthma where the death was considered preventable, they visited the emergency department an average of 8 times in the year prior to death?

The Asthma Initiative of Michigan (AIM) organized a group of asthma care experts to design standard emergency department instructions for asthma patients. They came up with the F.L.A.R.E. plan.

The F.L.A.R.E. plan is a concise tool to help patients know what to do when they are discharged from the emergency department after treatment for severe asthma symptoms. The plan is based on the NAEPP Guidelines for asthma management

- Follow up with your doctor
- Learn your medications
- Asthma is a chronic disease
- Respond to warning signs
- Emergency Care

The F.L.A.R.E. plan may help reduce E.D. visits and hospitalizations by saving time and presenting complete asthma messages. By giving asthma patients a plan of action until they can visit their doctor, the F.L.A.R.E. plan can improve their quality of care and quality of life.

The asthma coalitions are following up with the hospitals in their areas to make sure that they received the F.L.A.R.E. plan and know how to use it. The coalitions are also offering their services as a valuable community resource to both the emergency department and patients.

For more information about the F.L.A.R.E. plan, please visit, www.GetAsthmaHelp.org/FLARE.asp.

Please direct questions and comments about this newsletter to:

MI Asthma Communication Network
c/o American Lung Assoc. of Michigan
403 Seymour Avenue
Lansing, MI 48933-1179
phone: 1-866-395-8647
e-mail: info@GetAsthmaHelp.org

SPRING ASTHMA TIP:



Be Environment and Asthma Friendly

Spring has arrived! But, the sunshine, blue sky, and warm temperatures also mean "smog." Ground-level ozone, sometimes referred to as "smog," is created when a mixture of air pollutants "bake" in the hot, summer sun. Exposure to this type of pollution can be harmful, especially to people with asthma.

Here's what you can do to help reduce the level of unhealthy ozone in Michigan.

- Carpool, bus, walk or bicycle to work.
- Fill up your car's gas tank in the evening.
- Don't mow your lawn on very warm days; keep your grass cut at a higher cut level (3 inches); think about buying an electric lawnmower when it's time to replace the old one.
- Consider buying a fuel-efficient car for your next automobile purchase.
- Spread the word: tell your family, friends and neighbors what they can do to help and why.

GETASTHMAHELP.ORG UPDATE:

The GetAsthmaHelp.org staff is constantly trying to make sure that the website is easy to use. We want visitors to be able to find information easily and quickly. That's why we want to hear from you! If you have any suggestions or comments, please visit <http://getasthmahelp.com/survey.asp> and fill out a short survey.

Also, did you know that you can find the AIM newsletter online? Visit www.GetAsthmaHelp.org/newsletter.asp for current and past issues.



MI ASTHMA CALENDAR

April

17 Summit of Michigan Asthma Coalitions

Henry Center, Lansing, 9 a.m. to 3 p.m., free but must pre-register, for more info: 517-484-7206

May

3 Check Your Lung Function on World Asthma Day

Munson Community Health Center, Traverse City, 8 a.m. to 4 p.m., free, for more info: 231-935-6930

17 6th Annual Asthma Education Conference

Gilmore Center for Health Education, Kalamazoo, 3 a.m. to 7 p.m., \$25, for more info: 269-373-5025

20 Emerging Science in Asthma and Allergy Management

VistaTech Center at Schoolcraft College, Livonia, 10 a.m. to 2 p.m., for more info: 888-444-0333

21- National Conference on Asthma and Lead Poisoning

24 St. Mary's of Michigan, Saginaw, for more info: www.fni.org/leadandasthma.asp

June

14 AIM Homecoming

Henry Center, Lansing, 9 a.m. to 3:30 p.m., free but must pre-register, for more info: 517-484-7206



Support the American Lung Association of Michigan in May...to find a Blow the Whistle on Asthma Walk near you, call 1-800-Lung USA or visit www.asthmawalk.org