

COUGH, COUGH



New NYC law cracks down on idling cars

The fumes from idling taxicabs and delivery trucks can be so bad outside New York City schools that teachers race to close their classroom windows at certain times of the day to protect their students.

A new law seeks to cut that pollution by giving vehicles just 60 seconds to idle in a school zone.

The measure signed into law this month cuts the allowed idling time from three minutes to one minute around schools, and gives more city agencies the power to issue violations. It also requires an annual violations report so officials can track enforcement.

Councilman John Liu, lead sponsor of the bill, said the law was not only intended to reduce pollution in school areas — helping the city's high child asthma rates — but was also meant to improve public awareness about idling throughout New York City.

There is no federal anti-idling law, but about 30 states and dozens of municipalities have their own measures, typically limiting time to three to five minutes. New York's three-minute law has been in place citywide since 1971, but advocates say it is rarely enforced or advertised.

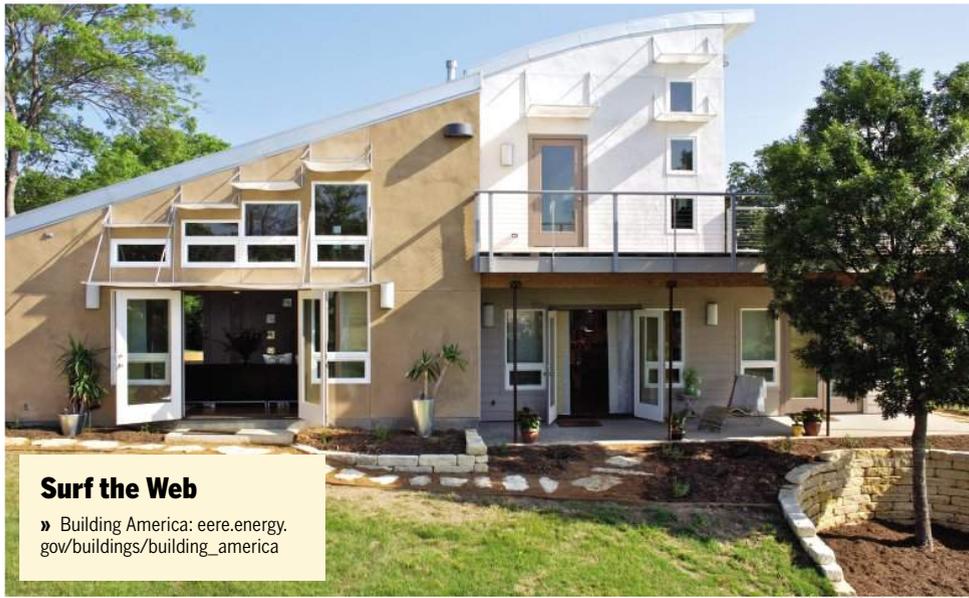
Fines range from \$220 to \$2,000 for repeat offenders. A city official testified in 2003 that just 325 idling violations had been issued the previous year. In 2007, there were just 526, and all but 10 of those were for diesel-fueled vehicles, meaning that there is little enforcement of passenger car idling.

Mayor Michael Bloomberg's office is planning a public awareness campaign about idling later this year, with advertisements for radio, bus stops and billboards. The city says the goal is to target drivers and remind them about the laws.

Officials also are planning to microtarget enforcement by using data from the city's 311 hot line, which citizens can call to make an idling complaint. Over the past two years, the hot line has received 4,600 such complaints.

A new report by the Environmental Defense Fund estimates that idling cars and trucks produce 130,000 tons of heat-trapping carbon dioxide each year in New York, contributing to global warming. The group says it believes the one-minute idling limit next to schools is the toughest such law in the United States. — AP

ECO SIMPLE with Robin Tierney



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» Building America: eere.energy.gov/buildings/building_america

Heather Ferrier's all-electric, 2,028-square-foot, two-story Texas home was built in 2006 by her father, Don Ferrier.

Home sweet efficient home

Green builder's houses get utility bills \$177 less a month than neighbors

Aspacious, attractive home with monthly utilities averaging \$177 less than the neighbors' bills? That's Don Ferrier's kind of house.

The Fort Worth, Texas, custom builder and National Association of Home Builders Green Buildings subcommittee member says houses should earn their keep. After all, buildings account for more than 40 percent of total U.S. energy consumption, according to a recent National Science and Technology Council report.

Ferrier's high performance credo is evident by such honors as the first LEED Platinum Home in Texas and third in the nation, 2007 Dallas Builders' Best Green Built Home, and four Energy Value Housing Awards.

At the Ecobuild conference in Washington, D.C. several weeks ago, he revealed some energy-saving strategies that owe more to eco-smart design than expensive, high-tech bells and whistles.

The biggest energy efficiency consideration is the south sun, Ferrier said. He elongates buildings on an east-west axis to mitigate the hot summer sun's effects. His toolkit includes light, high-reflectivity exteriors and shade.

Shade trees serve as sun shields during warm seasons; after shedding leaves, they allow passive solar warming of the home. Air-conditioning runs less due to window shades and strategically located windows and sliding doors.

Outdoor walls are positioned to channel breezes onto a passive solar porch — and a sunroom's recessed airlock entry controls temperature using the laws of physics instead of



Built-in savings

In 2006, Don Ferrier built an all-electric 2,028-square-foot, two-story house for his daughter Heather in Lake Weatherford, Texas. The utility bills range from \$75 to \$100 a month, compared with the local utility company TXU Energy's estimate of \$265 for comparable houses. And the green savings start at the front end — this house was built for \$217 a square foot.

"We have had clients want to replicate my home in its entirety with just a few modifications," Heather Ferrier said. Her father has been happy to oblige, and at the "Heather's Home" price per square foot. After all, she said, "Part of the home's message is that anyone can do it."

purchased power.

Ferrier angled a standing seam-coated roof of Galvalume steel, a highly durable, handsome material that reduces heat gain to maintain a comfortable indoor temperature. The exterior is clad in structural insulated panel because, Ferrier says, those insulated panels "give you the most bang for your energy efficiency buck."

Window placement maximizes lighting during the day, lowering power bills. Glass blocks provide light and privacy in the living room and master bedroom. Solar tubes channel natural light to illuminate closets and other spaces. South-facing windows and doors have deep eaves. And a highly efficient yet relatively inexpensive Daikin heating/cooling unit senses when rooms aren't occupied and automatically adjusts the temperature to save energy.

More tips from Ferrier:

» "Choose the highest efficiency appliances and air system you can afford."

» Add insulation everywhere.

» Decomposed granite "allows water to percolate down into ground." This nourishes the soil and avoids unwanted standing pools and erosion.

» Recycled and reclaimed materials enhance building performance.

» Materials must match climate. Durability rules in areas prone to hurricanes, tornadoes and floods. Experienced green designers and builders know which materials also offer curb appeal.

» Advanced framing techniques reduce both the amount of wood used and areas needing insulation.

» Paints and adhesives with low or zero volatile organic compounds and certified green carpets protect health.

» Use low-flow faucets and passive solar water heating.

If a contractor tries to dissuade you from using green materials or practices, Ferrier suggests this response: "Guess I'll have to find another builder." Increasing demand will increase supply of higher performance homes.

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GREEN BRIEFS

Judd urges end to mountaintop mining

FRANKFORT, KY. — Actress Ashley Judd added her voice Tuesday to calls to stop a mining practice that blasts away mountaintops to unearth coal.

The Kentucky native was among about 500 demonstrators who gathered Tuesday outside the state Capitol for a rally against so-called mountaintop removal coal mining.

"Mountaintop removal coal mining is a scourge on our land and on our people," the two-time Golden Globe nominee said from a podium at the Capitol steps. "Mountaintop removal coal mining is devouring vast acreages of irreplaceable hardwood forests." — AP

Power firm offers Utah deal over nuclear waste

SALT LAKE CITY — EnergySolutions Inc. said Tuesday it would offer Utah 50 percent of its revenues from the disposal of foreign nuclear waste at a site west of Salt Lake City if the state drops its objection to letting the company dump the material there.

"If we were able to use the 4.3 acres for internationally generated material, that could mean over a 10-year period around a billion dollars for the state coffers," EnergySolutions spokeswoman Jill Sigal said Tuesday, the same day new revenue estimates showed the state has a projected \$320 million budget shortfall for the budget year that begins July 1.

EnergySolutions wants to import 20,000 tons of low-level radioactive waste from shuttered nuclear power plants in Italy through the ports of Charleston, S.C., or New Orleans. If approved by the Nuclear Regulatory Commission, it would be the largest amount of radioactive waste ever imported into the country. — AP

Judge mulls penalty in St. Louis asbestos case

A federal judge is considering whether to sanction the city of St. Louis for violating clean air laws when it demolished buildings to make way for a new airport runway.

U.S. District Judge Carol Jackson heard arguments Tuesday in the penalty phase of a case she ruled on in September. She found then that the city had violated the U.S. Clean Air Act when it used the so-called "wet method" to remove asbestos from homes it was demolishing to make way for a new runway at Lambert Airport.

A group of residents in the suburb of Bridgeton sued the city of St. Louis over its mishandling of the demolition, which started in 2000. — AP