Idling Awareness at Elementary Schools
Dani Niswander and Brandon Sims

**Goal:** Working closely with the Idaho Department of Environmental Quality and parent-teacher organizations, we targeted parents and faculty, in an attempt to get them to commit to idling less while waiting in the pick-up/drop-off zones. Our goal was to motivate people to work together for the greater social good of the community. Turning off an automobile’s ignition has very little cost, but it has the potential to generate large benefits for everyone!

**Facts:**
- Contrary to popular belief, restarting your car does not burn more fuel than leaving it idling. In fact, idling for just 10 seconds wastes more gas than restarting the engine.
- Air pollution adversely affects students’ health. Inhaling car emissions can lead to respiratory damage and children are one of the most vulnerable groups.
- The best way to warm the engine is by easing into your drive. The vehicle's engine warms twice as quickly when driven.
- Cylinders, spark plugs, and the exhaust system are at risk. Idling an engine forces it to operate in a very inefficient and gasoline-rich mode that, over time, can degrade the engine’s performance and reduce mileage.

**Background:**
We met with local elementary school parent teacher organizations (PTOs) to identify a school that would be willing to work with us and let us observe their parking lots to collect data on how many people were idling.

Our next step was to try and find a way to decrease the number of idling cars. Through the use of new signage and meeting with the PTO we tried to encourage people to consider not only the health of students, but also the environmental impacts of leaving their car running.

Thanks to the Idaho Department of Environmental Quality, Hawthorne Elementary, and Ben Jarvis for their support and guidance for this project.