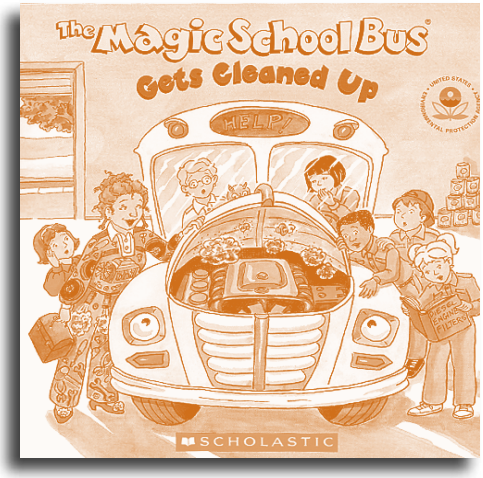
EPA United States Environmental Protection Agency New England

Environmental News in New England for Municipal Leaders

Fall 2008

The Local Landscape

The Magic School Bus Gets Cleaned Up!



EPA's Clean School Bus USA program and Scholastic came together to produce a new book in the Magic School Bus series entitled: "The Magic School Bus Gets Cleaned Up!" It was released on October 18, 2007 as a special edition that educates children (and adults!) on idle reduction and ways in which communities can help reduce the health risks from diesel exhaust. In this acclaimed educational series of books and videos for children in K-fourth grade, a teacher named Ms. Fizzle takes her class on science-oriented field trips riding in their magical school bus.

In "The Magic School Bus Gets Cleaned Up," the children and Ms. Frizzle explore the pollution emitted from their own diesel school bus and learn about how to reduce the emissions as they find themselves traveling through a diesel engine. At the end of the book, the "Magic School Bus" gets its own pollution control device, a diesel particulate-matter filter.

This special-edition book is intended to be used by libraries, schools, state and local air programs, non-profit education and outreach campaigns to spread awareness about reducing diesel emissions.

The books are free and can be ordered from the National Service Center for Environmental Publications, EPA's publication warehouse. They may not be sold.
For more information and how to order visit: www.epa.gov/otaq/schoolbus/msb-book.htm (more below)

INSIDE

Fish Kids!

To promote learning about safe fish consumption, EPA has developed the "Fish Kids Web site" to educate families and especially children about fish advisories through interactive and kid friendly web activities such as a memory game, fishing and camping trips and a section specially designed for parents and guardians. With this online tool your community's families can stay informed and better understand local fish advisories.

While fish is still an important part of a healthy diet, it is also true that fish caught in many bodies of water throughout *cont. on page 2*

Magic Bus on Tour

School Bus

Based on the magical yellow school bus of the children's series, Scholastic Inc. operates a traveling science laboratory housed in a yellow school bus. The bus tours the United States, offering hands-on science lessons to children at schools, fairs, and other community events.

Similar to the story in "The Magic School Bus Gets Cleaned Up," this traveling bus was retrofitted with a diesel particulate filter. With the filter on the engine exhaust system, particulate matter will be reduced by up to 90%.

Helping Communities Plan for Natural Disaster

The United States across all its regions faces a variety of Mother Nature's challenges and New England is no exception. Months of debris management and cleanup in the aftermath of Hurricane Katrina taught all levels of government that we can never be too prepared to deal with the aftermath from any kind of natural disaster. Whether it is an ice storm, tornado, earthquake or flood – the more severe the event, more debris will be generated.

The hours in the aftermath and the efficiency and coordination at all levels of government during the response, rescue and cleanup are vital to ensuring communities can back on their feet as quickly as possible. Debris management and removal has often been the longest and most expensive element of disaster recovery. Rubble, vegetative debris, wood waste, newly contaminated soil and water and personal property among others –severely hinder the recovery period in affected areas.

To help communities prepare now disaster clean ups, EPA has developed the Planning for Natural Disaster Debris guide. This guide is based on experiences of communities and states and provides helpful planning suggestions and steps that local officials can take now. By developing disaster management plans ahead of time, cleanup actions can commence automatically without wrinkles or confusion.
Helpful references include:

- Management options for various debris streams.
- A collection of case studies highlighting how several communities prepared for and managed debris generated by recent natural disasters.
- A list of federal, state and local resources to consult in planning.

This guide is consistent with information provided by the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) and individual states and additionally emphasizes the importance of managing disaster debris in an environmentally protective manner.
For a copy of the document, please visit:www.epa.gov/epaoswer/non-hw/debris-new/disaster.htm

Each year thousands of oil and chemical spills are reported. Most of these are handled by local police, firefighters and industry first responders. EPA responds to several hundred large spills a year. During major disasters, EPA may be called upon to offer assistance to state and local governments in response to a release of hazardous materials from a major disaster or emergency.

(cont.) Fish Kids!

New England are unsafe to consume in large amounts, if at all. This is mostly due to mercury hazards, but in some cases other contaminants pose additional health risks.

It is one challenge standing before federal, state and local governments to ensure that the message gets out to populations who may be impacted by mercury or other contamination in fish. While EPA works with municipalities to keep officials informed of fish advisories, it is crucial that the message reaches families. Both adults and children need to be aware of advisories that may exist in their community and what they mean. This Web site is user friendly and especially geared for kids. Children are believe it or not, sometimes more effective than a government agency in getting adults to exercise caution when it comes to their health!

Unfortunately all too often these days, more care must be exercised before fishing locally to get dinner on the table. This means more work must be done at all levels of government to ensure that heath risks from contaminated fish are easily understood across all ages and languages.

> Both adults and children need to be aware of advisories that may exist in their community.

While cleanup efforts are constantly ongoing and more pollution controls are put in place, contaminants take time (some a verylong time) to disappear from our environment and our bodies if we ingest too much. Teaching children and adults about which fish are safe to eat will not only protect their health – but open the door to a larger understanding of our complex natural environment. Children who learn about fish advisories in their community might start to ask, "Why isn'tthat fish ok to eat?" Those tough questions are the first step towards creating a new generation of minds who will seek the answers and hopefully, greater solutions.
www.epa.gov/fishadvisories/kids/


Photo: OlegVolk

Green Etiquette for Outdoor Lighting

Properly designed and installed exterior lighting can improve nighttime visibility, safety and security in a community while also minimizing energy use, operating costs, glare, and light 'trespass'. Many municipalities now have ordinances or bylaws that require new or replacement fixtures to have a fully shielded ("full cut-off") design.

Under these municipal ordinances, discouraged outdoor lighting tends to be labeled as 'unshielded' and produce unnecessary glare and light trespass.

"Acceptable Lighting" includes fixtures that shield the light source and facilitate better vision during the night hours. Some examples include:

- fully shielded fixtures, wall-pack and wall mount fixtures, 'period' style fixtures (bulb shielded in opaque top), security lights
- full cut-off fixtures and streetlights
- shielded/ properly-aimed PAR floodlights
- flush mounted canopy fixtures

Composting is Easy!

This autumn as new Englanders are busying tidying up their lawns and enjoying the colorful outdoors, promote the idea of composting as a way to deal with some yard wastes in your community. Composting is an easy way to have great fertilizer or potting soil ready for spring gardens and it cuts back on the use of plastic bags and the burden on municipal waste facilities.

- While many foods can also be composted it's important to **NOT** compost meats, dairy products, fats, oils or greases as they may attract neighbors pets, or less domesticated woodland creatures.
- **DO Compost:** Vegetable trimmings, egg shells, coffee grounds with filters, tea bags and even leaves, grass, and yard clippings, vacuum cleaner lint, wool and cotton rags, sawdust, shredded newspaper and fireplace ashes all work great for composting.

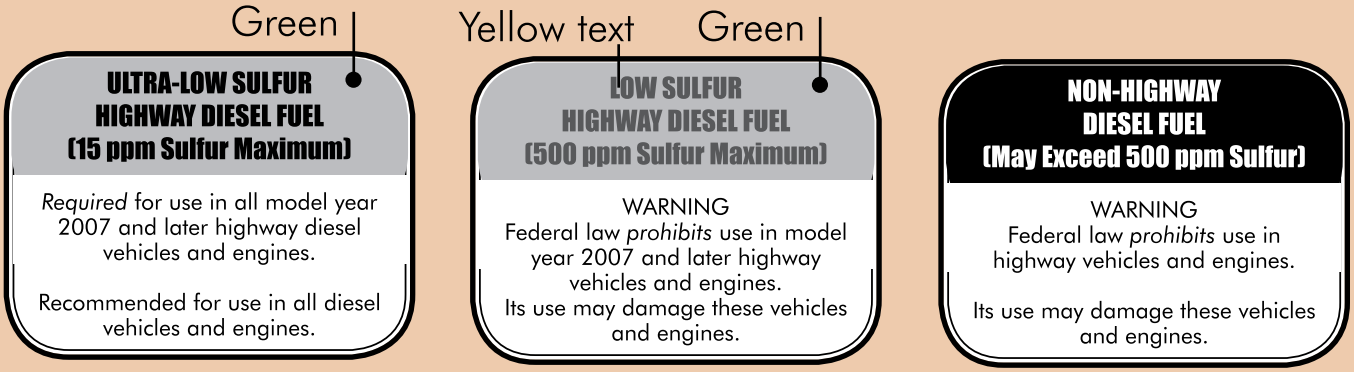
A compost pile can be set up in a corner of the yard with a few supplies.

- Choose a level spot 3- to 5-feet square near a water source and preferably out of direct sunlight.
- Clear the area of sod and grass. When building a composting bin with chicken wire, scrap wood, or cinder blocks, be sure to leave enough space for air to reach the pile. One removable side makes it easier to access.
- Start the pile with a 4-inch layer of leaves, loose soil, or other coarse yard trimmings. If you are going to compost food scraps (a slightly more involved process), you should mix them with yard trimmings when adding them to the pile. Alfalfa meal or clean cat litter may be added to the pile to absorb odors.
- In dry weather, sprinkle water on the pile, but don't get it too soggy. Turn the pile every few weeks with a pitchfork to circulate air and distribute moisture evenly.
- Don't be surprised by the heat of the pile or if you see worms, as both are a sign of thriving compost and part of the natural decomposition process.
- In most climates, the compost is done in 3 to 6 months when it becomes a dark crumbly material with uniform texture. Spread it in the garden, yard beds or under a shrubbery come spring and summer - or use it as potting soil.
- It might go without saying, but try to keep kids from playing in the compost!
- Coordinate with your public wroks department for yard waste and composting options in your town.

Cleaner Diesel Fuels!

Have you seen the new signs on diesel fuel dispensers? Are diesel trucks in your community putting out a little less of that telltale black puff of exhaust when they drive off? What you might not know is that diesel fuel has recently gotten a lot cleaner. Today's diesel fuel has less sulfur in it than ever before. The fuel going into diesel cars and trucks is 97% cleaner and the fuel going into non-road engines—such as construction equipment, but they are moving in the same direction. By 2012, all non-road, marine and locomotive engines will be using ultra-low-sulfur diesel (ULSD) fuel, with a maximum of 15 parts per million sulfur content. The amount of sulfur in highway diesel, or ULSD, is now lower than that in regular gasoline. Additionally, emissions standards for new diesel engines have been lowered. New diesel vehicles are coming equipped with advanced pollution controls—similar to catalytic converters—that are significantly reducing harmful emissions from diesel exhaust. Both with the new technology and the ULSD fuel, it is possible to meet EPA's emissions standards for new engines.

API Suggested Diesel Pump Labels - Compliant with EPA 40 CFR 80.570



Clean Air Zone–Turn off your engines!

Connecticut, Massachusetts, New Hampshire and Rhode Island all have rules which limit the time allowed for various types of vehicles to idle. Excessive idling wastes fuel, causes engine wear and tear and contributes to air pollution and emits unnecessary greenhouse gases into the atmosphere. With some variations and exceptions ranging from communities, the rules generally limit idling to 5 minutes.

For every extra minute of idling, a diesel truck emits a third of a pound of carbon dioxide (CO_2) and a car emits a sixth of a pound of CO_2 into the air. That's 2-5 cents of fuel and unneeded wear and tear on your vehicle for each and every minute of idling! Make sure municipal vehicles are following these rules and encourage this for personal vehicles around your city or town.

Stuck in traffic gridlock? 'Running' into the post office or store? Or pulling into a long line of cars waiting at a "drive thru", do your part and turn it off!

Excessive idling wastes fuel, causes engine wear and tear and contributes to air pollution and emits unnecessary greenhouse gases into the atmosphere.

Protecting Children's Environmental Health in New England

"We do not inherit the earth from our ancestors; we borrow it from our children"

—Native American proverb

At EPA, protecting children, our youngest and most sensitive citizens, from environmental health risks is fundamental to our vision of making the world a better place. There are currently more than three million children living in the New England region and the numbers are always increasing. Encourage your community to reference our website and multitude of resources to help protect children's health.

EPA Hosts 9th Annual Indoor Air Quality Tools for Schools National Symposium December 4-8, 2008 Washington D.C.

EPA is set to host its annual Indoor Air Quality Tools for Schools (IAQ TfS) National Symposium in Washington, DC, to bring together past, present and future leaders in protecting and improving IAQ in our nation's schools. The IAQ Tools for Schools Program is a nationwide initiative to help school officials assess, resolve and prevent IAQ problems and to reduce exposure to asthma triggers in school facilities. While school officials, administrators, facilities and operations personnel, teachers, parents and students traditionally attend, the Symposium is open to anyone with an interest in IAQ in schools. Registration is now open! Visit www.iaqsymposium.com

EPA now has a new suite of "Envisioning Excellence" resources for school districts too. Envisioning Excellence helps schools take effective action to advance health, safety and wellness initiatives. Envisioning Excellence includes Six Key Drivers—organizational and fundamental guidelines that ensure effective IAQ programs for schools. Five profiles in excellence are also showcased to demonstrate how different school districts applied the framework to create effective and enduring IAQ programs.www.iaqsymposium.com/envisioningexcellence.html

Local Officials to Advise EPA in Boston

EPA's Local Government Advisory Committee (LGAC) will meet in Boston on November 6-7, 2008 in EPA Region 1 Boston, Massachusetts office. The Local Government Advisory Committee, chartered in 1993 under the Federal Advisory Committee Act, is comprised of elected and appointed local officials from across the United States. Its charge is to provide advice and recommendations that assist EPA in developing a stronger partnership with local governments to deliver environmental services and programs.

Local officials are invited to speak during the committee's public comment period. Interested individuals should email Doug Gutro in advance at: gutro.doug@epa.gov

For more information on EPA's LGAC, visit:www.epa.gov/ocir/scas_lgac/lgac_index.htm

Climate Change Forum at UNH

On June 19 EPA held a conference on climate change at the University of New Hampshire in Durham. The conference was held in conjunction with EPA's Office of Research and Development, The Northeast States for Coordinated Air Use Management (NESCAUM), The New England Interstate Water Pollution Control Commission (NEIWPCC) and Carbon Solutions New England (UNH).

At the conference 200 scientists/experts from academia, New England's interstate organizations, federal, regional, state and municipal government came together to examine the latest scientific research on the impacts of climate change and what can be done to prepare. Speakers gave presentations on the impact to coastal areas, health and air quality, water resources and infrastructure, as well as the tools and opportunities to prepare for impacts. In addition, EPA announced the two New England estuaries (Massachusetts Bays Program and the New Hampshire Estuaries Project) that are now part of EPA's Climate Ready Estuaries Program.

The latest scientific research on the impacts of climate change was examined.

Find presentations and more on the Climate Forum: www.epa.gov/region1/climatechange

Healthy Homes

Most people spend over 90% of their time indoors. Indoor environments, especially homes are where you and your family may spend much of your time. EPA has created a brochure offering ways to make homes healthier places. It includes information on indoor and outdoor air quality, pesticides, toxic household products, mold, tobacco smoke, radon, drinking water contaminants and making your home "green". It is available in print and electronically (in both English and Spanish) and covers lots of different topics and links to Web sites.
www.epa.gov/region1/healthyhomes/index.html

EPA New England Local Government Office

EPA New England
1 Congress Street
Suite 1100
Boston, MA 02114-2023
phone (617) 918-1021
fax (617) 918-0021

Editor
Jeanethe Falvey
falvey.jeanethe@epa.gov

EPA Contributors
Molly Barker, Doug Gutro, Halida Hatic, Christine Hayak, Amy Miller, Kate Renahan, Alison Simcox, Jeri Weiss & Paul Wintrob
www.epa.gov/region1

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1 Congress Street
Suite 1100
Boston, MA 02114

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For an A to Z list of activities and kid friendly information for a rainy day this fall check out:
www.epa.gov/kids/atozindex.htm