



A few comments about environmental responsibility

Most of us look at making changes in what we do primarily in the interest of saving money. Saving snail darters and sperm whales is generally left up to Al Gore and the tree huggers, or is it? Do we have an environmental responsibility? We will let you answer that after a review of the following.

There is an unwritten rule that the engine on police vehicles is left on at all times when the vehicle is in service. Who made up that rule and why? Actually, this policy goes all the way back to the time when vehicles were hand cranked. It is VERY hard to hand crank a hot engine. Later, the procedure was continued after the invention of the electric starter on the basis that the engine had to keep running in order to run the *generator* (the forerunner of today's alternator). The two-way radios, sirens, and light bars (actually rotating beacons in earlier days) consumed large amounts of power so the practice of leaving the engine running made sense. Later, air conditioning was added. The additional load of the air conditioner made it virtually impossible to start a hot engine with the old 6-volt electrical systems (which is one of the reasons we use 12 volts today).

Today, we have good electrical systems, high capacity batteries and low current drain radios, lights, and sirens. So why do we still leave the engine running at all times? Well, it is nice to return to a cool (or warm) vehicle, but the fact is that the practice is very hard on the engine (sludge build up among other things) coupled with the fact that fuel is wasted, and we are releasing more particle pollution. So you say, what's the big deal about particle pollution? Consider the following:

The non-profit Environmental Working Group (EWG) recently conducted random tests on samples of umbilical-cord blood taken by the American Red Cross from 10 babies located in different parts of the USA. A total of 287 chemicals were detected with 180 of them known to cause cancer, 217 being toxic to the brain and nervous system and 208 known to cause birth defects or abnormal development.

House Democrat Louise Slaughter of New York, who is leading the charge for more accountable standards, tested her own blood and found 271 harmful substances pulsing through her veins with one of the main contributors being AUTO EXHAUST FUMES. Additional information is available at www.ewg.org/reports/bodyburden2.

The fact is that American police vehicles are idling up to 90% of the time! Much of that time is when there is no one in the vehicle! Not only is this contributing to particle pollution, shortening the life of the engine, and wasting fuel, it is actually causing battery problems. Today's alternators are set for DRIVING, not idling conditions. Unlike the old alternator, they can be set for typical vehicle conditions. Since they are set for driving, the idling output to the battery is not sufficient to maintain a properly charged battery. The result is frequent replacement (and the associated problems with disposal) coupled with lack of reliable starting reserves – the exact opposite of the effect of idling in the decades of the Model T, the flat head V8 and even the little Nash Rambler!

We won't even attempt to address the impact of increased petroleum usage except to say that you can expect prices to continue to escalate. Just for giggles, give us a call and ask us to tell you what is happening in India as a result of current trends in outsourced customer service. You won't believe it! Speaking of things you won't believe, send an email to burch@falcondirect.com for a copy of a recent project in Dubai, Saudi Arabia. This may help you better understand the high price of gasoline!