Would you turn off your engine, please?



You are going to read an article about an environmental campaigner. Five sentences have been removed from the article. Choose the sentence (A - G) which fits each gap. You do not need to use all the letters.

I was walking around my neighborhood in New York one spring evening two years ago when I came across a stretch limousine parked outside a restaurant. The driver's clients were inside having dinner, and he had his engine running while he waited. It really bothered me. He was polluting the air we breathe as well as wasting huge amounts of fuel, so I knocked on the driver's window.

I explained to him that he didn't need to waste his boss's money or pollute our air. I addressed the issues politely and, after a ten-minute chat, he agreed to shut off" the engine. I felt empowered – I could make a difference in our environment. 1.1 .....

Six months later, I talked to a guy who turned out to be an undercover police officer. He told me he wouldn't turn off his engine because he was on a job, but asked me if I knew there was actually a law against engine idling, as it's called. 1.2 ..... Sure enough, under New York City's traffic laws, you could be fined up to $2,000 for engine idling for more than three minutes.

I had small business cards printed up that referred to the relevant law on one side and the penalties on the other, and started to hand them out to idlers. I've been distributing them in this way ever since. It's surprising how many people are unaware that they could get a fine. That's why I start my encounters the same way every time.

I say: 'Excuse me for bothering you, but are you aware that it is against the law in New York City to idle your car for more than three minutes? 1.3 ..... They want to know who I am, am I a cop? I tell them that I'm just a concerned citizen and want to make sure we improve our environment and address our oil addiction.

We usually have a discussion and I always try to conclude the encounter on a positive and polite note, saying how great it would be if they shut off their engine so we can all have a better environment. 1.4 ..... Most are convinced by these arguments. Indeed, I'm successful seventy-eight percent of the time. Although, of course, there are people who are aggressive or who won't do it. My success rate with cops is only five percent.

I keep an Excel spreadsheet so that I have a precise record of each of my encounters. If I get an aggressive reaction, I list their comments and highlight them in red. 1.5 .....
I don't give up, however, and try to approach them professionally. But my feelings do get hurt on occasion. Then I remind myself that because I make the first approach, I'm actually the aggressor in this situation. My victims are just sitting there thinking; 'Who is this guy?'

To date, I have had 2,500 encounters and, overall, I have made a difference. I'm in touch with the Department of Energy in Washington and my work is endorsed by the American Lung Association. And recently a New York traffic cop wrote the city's very first ticker for idling.

A. I also tell them that it saves money and avoids breaking the law.

B. I decided to have these conversations on a regular basis after that.

C. I find this fact always takes my victims by surprise.

D. I went home and checked this out.

E. It's not the sort of mistake that you make twice.

F. I try not to get affected emotionally if drivers respond in this way.

G. They don't know what I am saying.

LIVEWORKSHEETS