

Why does it smell like fuel when waiting for takeoff?



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The most common occasion when the airplane smells like fuel is during pushback from the gate, but it can happen anywhere on the ground. The reason is that the air conditioning on an airliner works by tapping off air from the compressor stage in the engines (bleed-air). This stage should only contain clean air ...

Ingested air is "bled" from the compressor stage of the jet engines or APU in the tail. That air ends up in the airplane and when the ingested air is foul the airplane will smell bad, or even produce visible 'smoke', fumes.

On the ground while pushing back and during taxi or holding in close proximity of other jet engines and/or APUs, it often happens that the engines of your plane ingest the exhaust of others or even your own.

An APU is that little noisy jet engine that lives in the tail of the airplane. You will have no doubt noticed that 'hole' all the way in the back end of the aircraft. That is the exhaust of the small **Auxiliary Power Unit**. It is not used to provide propulsion but to produce electricity and air when the big engines are off. It's also a backup for that.

During pushback when that little tail-jet is still providing aircon, you are pushing the air intake of the APU into the foul air that the same APU just dumped overboard as exhaust.

These fumes are highly toxic and should NOT be in the cabin and cockpit breathing air at any time! And it gets even worse when fumes are visible!

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www.syndrome-aerotoxique.com

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