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NEWS

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ASTM Issues Biodiesel Fuel Standard

Fuel specification will increase consumer confidence and streamline purchase process

WASHINGTON, DC – The premier standard-setting organization in the United States has issued a fuel specification for biodiesel, an alternative fuel that can be made from any fat or oil, such as soybean oil. The American Society of Testing and Materials (ASTM) issued Specification D 6751 for all biodiesel fuel bought and sold in the U.S., marking a major milestone for the biodiesel industry.

"Now that the full standard is in place, it sets the bar for all biodiesel production," said Steve Howell, Chairman of the ASTM Biodiesel Standards Task Force. "It will help protect consumers from poor products and reduce the cost of buying and selling biodiesel. While many adopted the provisional specification in 1999 [PS 121], those that didn't had to negotiate a specification. With the final passage of D 6751, they won't have to go through that process any more."

Although ASTM Committee D2 approved the standard in December, it only recently became available to the public. The process of reaching the standard, entitled "Standard Specification for Biodiesel Fuel (B100) Blend Stock for Distillate Fuels," was extremely thorough according to ASTM officials.

"The biodiesel standard was developed through a consensus process that reflects many points of view," said Dave Bradley, ASTM Manager, Committee D2. "You have fuel producers, users, engine makers and others all having an opportunity to provide input." The ASTM Biodiesel Task Force began working on the standard in 1994.

Biodiesel can be used in any diesel engine, usually with no modifications to the engine necessary. It performs comparably to diesel, with similar BTU content and higher cetane. It offers excellent lubricity and lower emissions compared to petroleum diesel. D 6751 covers the incorporation of pure biodiesel (B100) into conventional diesel fuel up to 20 percent by volume (B20). Higher blend levels may be acceptable, depending on the experience of the engine company. More than 100 major fleets currently use B20, including the U.S. Postal Service, the City of Philadelphia, the U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA), several public transit systems, national parks, school districts, private recycling and concrete companies and the National Aeronautics & Space Administration (NASA).

Biodiesel is registered with the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) as a fuel and fuel additive. It is the only alternative fuel to have completed the rigorous Health Effects testing requirements of the Clean Air Act. Results show biodiesel reduces carcinogenic air toxics by 75-90% compared to diesel. Pure biodiesel (B100) is also non-toxic, biodegradable and essentially free of sulfur. Emissions it reduces include particulate matter, unburned hydrocarbons, carbon monoxide and sulfates. B100 (pure biodiesel) also reduces life cycle carbon dioxide by 78% compared to petroleum diesel according to a joint U.S. Department of Agriculture/Department of Energy study.

Those interested in getting a copy of the standard can buy it for \$30 at www.astm.org. To contact ASTM customer service directly, call (610) 832-9585 or e-mail service@astm.org.

Readers can learn more about biodiesel by visiting www.biodiesel.org. The National Biodiesel Board is funded in part by the United Soybean Board and state soybean board checkoff programs.

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