



Nat'l Biodiesel Board
3337A Emerald Ln.
P O Box 104898
Jefferson City, MO
65110-4898
(573) 635-3893 phone
(800) 841-5849
(573) 635-7913 fax
www.biodiesel.org

NEWS

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Contact: Jenna Higgins/NBB
1-800-841-5849

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Biodiesel Emissions Reduce Cancer Risk Compared to Diesel

In wake of EPA conclusion that diesel can cause lung cancer, biodiesel can reduce cancer-causing compounds by 90 percent

JEFFERSON CITY, Mo. – The Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) announcement that long-term exposure to diesel exhaust will likely cause lung cancer provides further reason for America to expand use of a cleaner-burning alternative that is already commercially available. Biodiesel, a fuel usually made from soybean oil, can reduce targeted cancer-causing compounds by up to 90 percent. More than 200 vehicle fleets nationwide already use biodiesel, and the fuel works in any diesel engine without requiring modifications.

The EPA study brings to conclusion decades of research and highlights the health problems posed by the emissions of older heavy-duty diesel engines operating nationwide. "The overall evidence for potential human health effects of diesel exhausts is persuasive," the report said.

"This is not a huge surprise because diesel exhaust has long been a suspected carcinogen," said Joe Jobe, executive director of the National Biodiesel Board (NBB). "But it does underscore the need for cleaner fuel...and that's where biodiesel comes in. Biodiesel dramatically reduces health risks associated with exhaust."

Polycyclic Aromatic Hydrocarbons (PAH) and Nitrated Polycyclic Aromatic Hydrocarbons (nPAH) are EPA-targeted compounds thought to cause cancer from diesel engine exhaust. Pure biodiesel reduces most PAH compounds by 80 percent and nPAH compounds by 90 percent. The findings are the result of two years of independent studies on biodiesel as the fuel completed the Health Effects Testing Requirements of the Clean Air Act. To date, biodiesel is the only fuel to have completed the tests, and the industry submitted the results to the EPA.

"Completing the health effects testing was a huge investment for the industry, most of which came from soybean farmers in the form of their checkoff dollars," Jobe said. "But it was worth every penny for us to be able to show that biodiesel does not threaten human health. It's just one more reason to use more of this renewable fuel."

EPA studied diesel vehicles built prior to the mid-1990s. Although current diesel technology is much cleaner than older models, the life of a diesel engine can exceed 20 years, so older vehicles are likely to operate for years to come. Biodiesel use helps lower emissions from these vehicles.

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In addition, biodiesel will work with new, cleaner engine technology. Biodiesel can be used on its own or blended with petroleum diesel at any level – including the ultra low sulfur diesel that the government will require beginning in 2006.

Biodiesel performs comparably to diesel, with similar BTU content and higher cetane. More than 200 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 EPA as a fuel and fuel additive. Biodiesel biodegrades as fast as sugar and is ten times less toxic than table salt. It is essentially free of sulfur. Emissions it reduces include particulate matter, unburned hydrocarbons, carbon monoxide and sulfates. Soy 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.

Readers can learn more about biodiesel by visiting www.biodiesel.org.

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