



Oregon Department of Transportation

NEWS RELEASE

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ODOT increases use of efficient, renewable biodiesel fuel

Furthering Governor Ted Kulongoski's biofuels initiative for state government, the Oregon Department of Transportation is expanding its use of alternative fuels to the Portland area. The agency announced this week it has begun using biodiesel fuel in all of its diesel vehicles in the urban Portland area, in addition to all of its Salem-area diesel vehicles. ODOT is using B20 biodiesel, a blend of 20-percent biodiesel and 80-percent diesel fuel, in its heavy and light dump trucks, equipment transporters, bridge cranes, highway maintenance equipment and specialty vehicles. Last year, the Governor directed state agencies to meet the biodiesel targets set out in his Renewable Energy Action Plan: 10 percent B20 by mid 2007 and 25 percent B20 by 2010.

"ODOT applauds the Governor's leadership in calling for increased use of biodiesel and ethanol in state vehicles — it really makes good sense," said ODOT Director Matt Garrett. "It has lower emissions than petroleum diesel and can be manufactured right here in Oregon — either from renewable resources that are grown or from used vegetable oil that is collected and then refined." In addition, the B20 blend that ODOT purchases is comparable in cost to regular diesel.

ODOT's B20 biodiesel blend is less toxic than table salt and biodegrades quickly, allowing for a healthier environment for employees who work around diesel equipment and the communities in which ODOT operates vehicles.

Currently, ODOT uses approximately 16,000 gallons of the blend per month — about 7 percent of the total diesel fuel the agency uses statewide. ODOT is on track to meet the Governor's directive of 10 percent in 2007 and, provided cost and availability considerations remain favorable, 25 percent in 2010.

ODOT hasn't experienced any major problems with the use of the fuel in its equipment, and operators haven't noticed any change in performance. There are no compatibility problems while using a B20 blend and engine manufacturers will typically honor their warranties when a B20 blend is used. In fact, studies have shown, among other benefits, that biodiesel can extend engine life because of its superior lubricating properties.

ODOT's biodiesel comes from distributors in Portland and Eugene and is refined in Salem from used cooking oil. As a result, ODOT's use of biodiesel helps stimulate the local economy while also putting a significant waste stream to beneficial use.

ODOT is also using other forms of alternative fuel. Over the last two years, as the older sedans in its fleet have been retired, ODOT has added flex-fuel vehicles. These vehicles can be fueled with either regular gasoline or E85 ethanol (85 percent ethanol and 15 percent gasoline). This will enable ODOT to help meet the Governor's directive of state vehicles using 10 percent E85 by 2010. ODOT Director Garrett demonstrates his commitment to the use of alternative fuels by driving a flex-fuel Ford Taurus when on state business, which he personally refuels at the Department of Administrative Services Motor Pool E85 station in Salem.

Ethanol is an alcohol-based alternative fuel produced by fermenting and distilling starch crops. Use of ethanol results in many of the same benefits as biodiesel, including reduced greenhouse gas emissions and reduced dependence on foreign oil. The agency has also purchased several gasoline-electric hybrid vehicles. Overall, of ODOT's 225 vehicles, 42 are flex-fuel vehicles and eight are hybrids.

For more information about ODOT's use of biodiesel and other alternative fuels, contact Damon Fordham, ODOT Sustainability Program manager, at damon.fordham@odot.state.or.us or 503-986-3491.

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