

Current test of diesel fuel additive may lead to clean-air mandate

L.A. company's product gets support from City Councilman Alatorre

BY JANICE M. CURTIS

The California Air Resources Board began a test last week of a diesel fuel additive that has been successful in reducing smoke and emissions from trucks, buses and other diesel-powered vehicles by up to 42 percent.

If the panel embraces the chemical — manufactured by Los Angeles-based Omstar Inc. — state officials are more likely to mandate the use of an additive in all diesel fuel until a cleaner fuel can be found, said Brad Sales, a spokesman for Los Angeles City Councilman Richard Alatorre.

The test resulted in part from 18 months of pressure from Alatorre, who's taken an aggressive stance in favor of a cleaner-burning diesel fuel. Besides his active lobbying of the Air Resources Board to test the fuel additive, he's also presented a motion to the City Council to require that all diesel fuel sold in the city be the least polluting available.

Sales said Alatorre is trying to find a way to clean up the city's air until an alternative fuel can be found. The Air Resources Board test, slated to last about four weeks, is designed to determine the effect of the additive on emissions and particulates (or soot) from diesel engines, said Robert Kou, associate motor vehicle pollution control engineer at the board. Cost of the test, conducted by a private laboratory, Olson Engineering Inc. of Huntington Beach, is estimated at \$117,300.

A preliminary test of the fuel additive by the Air Resources Board last fall found a trend toward lower emissions rates; but the board called for an expanded test using eight vehicles owned by the City of Los Angeles to more fully determine the impact of the fuel additive. A report of the test will be sent to the city, Kou said. If this test proves successful, it will probably be followed up by a fleet test using about 40 trucks.



Alatorre

The fuel additive is already being used by several companies in the area, including Hudson General Aviation Services, which operates shuttle bus services at Los Ange-

les International Airport and a fleet of buses at the University of California, Los Angeles, and American President Lines of Oakland, a cargo carrier that uses the additive at its harbor facilities in Los Angeles and Taiwan.

In a six-month test conducted by International Automotive Testing Laboratories of Smta Ana on American President Lines diesel equipment, the laboratory found an overall emission reduction of 33.5 percent.

Hudson General, which tested the additive in its UCLA shuttle buses for four months, found an average emissions reduction of 30 percent, said Harold Alves, Hudson manager of maintenance services. Use of the additive has been expanded to the company's ground support equipment at LAX and in July it began using the additive at its six Canadian sites. In August, the

company began using the additive at JFK International Airport in New York, he said.

It costs Hudson about 3 cents a gallon to treat the diesel fuel, Alves said. At LAX, Hudson General uses about 20,000 gallons of diesel fuel each week.

The increased use of the additive is pumping up revenues for Omstar. In the second quarter of the year, ended June 30, the company shipped out about \$120,000 of the additive, Omstar President Richard Skaggs said. That's up from only \$10,000 in the same quarter last year. Skaggs anticipates additive sales this year for Omstar to hit about \$1.5 million.

Besides testing the fuel additive in trucks, buses and other vehicles, Skaggs also has proposed to Gov. George Deukmejian that the additive be state's power plants to determine if it could reduce corrosive sulfur emission are partly responsible for acid rain.



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