

What is Your Position on Biofuel and Biodiesel?

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Biodiesel is an alternative to conventional, petroleum derived diesel. In general, the term biodiesel covers a variety of materials made from vegetable oils and animal fats, including used cooking oil. Diesel engines can run on neat (100%) biodiesel, B100, most usage and testing in the US is being done using blends of biodiesel and low sulfur diesel. The most common and efficient is a 20% blend of biodiesel with low sulfur diesel referred to as B20.

Testing has concluded that B20 produces lower emissions of particulate matter, hydrocarbons and carbon monoxide than conventional diesel fuel. The energy content of B100 is lower than that of conventional diesel, however numerous test have shown no appreciable loss of performance. B100 has good lubricity properties and contains essentially no sulfur or aromatics; it does however have a relatively high pour point limiting its use in colder climates.

Although biodiesel is biodegradable, this property leads to increased biological growth during storage because both biodiesel and various blends can retain up to 20% more water than petroleum diesel. An additional concern associated with the storage of biodiesel and various blends is biodiesel is a straight chain fatty acid and more susceptible to oxidative degradation than petroleum diesel.

FTI is an advocate for the use and production of biofuel. Renewable energy is our future and we embrace the technological advances being made in all arenas.

However, we are in the stored diesel fuel maintenance business and we would be doing our industry a disservice if we were to claim that we have a solution for the long term storage of biodiesel. We believe that a solution, or solutions, are near, but as of this writing, it is our opinion that introducing biodiesel, or any blend of biodiesel into a storage tank for the service of an emergency or standby power system or fire pump is not recommended. Until there is sufficient data that shows that there are products and procedures resolving these issues, FTI will not change this position, especially where mission critical operations are concerned.