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NEWS

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Big Win for Biodiesel: ASTM Approves New Biodiesel Blend Specifications *Automakers, Fleets Encouraged by New Biodiesel Standards*

Vancouver, British Columbia – The biodiesel industry is celebrating today following last night's final vote by the ASTM International D02 Main Committee to approve a trio of long-awaited ASTM specifications for biodiesel blends. After more than five years of extensive research and subsequent balloting by the ASTM fuel experts in the blended fuel balloting process, ASTM has finally voted to approve three key sets of biodiesel specifications that should significantly bolster automaker support and consumer demand for biodiesel:

- Changes to the existing B100 biodiesel blend stock specification (ASTM D6751)
- Finished specifications to include up to 5% biodiesel (B5) in the conventional petrodiesel specification (ASTM D975)
- A new specification for blends of between 6 percent biodiesel (B6) to 20 percent biodiesel (B20) for on and off road diesel.

Automakers and engine manufacturers have been requesting a finished blend specification for B20 biodiesel blends for several years, with some citing the need for that spec as the single greatest hurdle preventing their full-scale acceptance of B20 use in their diesel vehicles.

Steve Howell, Chairman of the ASTM Biodiesel Task Force, said, "The new ASTM specifications for B6-B20 blends will aid engine manufacturers in their engine design and testing processes to optimize the performance of vehicles running on biodiesel. The new specifications will also help ensure that only the highest quality biodiesel blends are made available to consumers at the retail pump."

Automaker Chrysler LLC was instrumental in working with the ASTM task force toward B20 specification development and approval, having supported fleet use of B20 in its Dodge Ram diesel pickups since January 2006. Chrysler Safety and Regulatory spokesman Max Gates stated, "This action by the ASTM committee is a milestone in our nation's effort to expand the role of renewable fuels, including biodiesel, in addressing our energy, environmental and economic challenges. Chrysler LLC is committed to working with our partners in the transportation industry to build on this action and make biodiesel an alternative available to all of our customers."

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John Gaydash, Director of Marketing for General Motors Fleet and Commercial Operations, said, “The new ASTM spec for B6 – B20 is a major building block in GM’s efforts to elevate biodiesel as part of our overall energy diversity strategy. We are eager to work with the National Biodiesel Board on efforts to continue to ensure biodiesel fuel quality, as well as to increase our support for biodiesel use in our diesel vehicle lineup.” Currently, GM accepts the use of B5 in all of its diesel vehicles, and offers B20 use as a Special Equipment Option (SEO). The SEO is available to government fleets on specific configurations of the Chevy Silverado and GMC Sierra Heavy Duty Pickups, as well as the GMC Savanna and Chevy Express Commercial Cutaway Vans.

The final passage of the new ASTM specifications for biodiesel is welcome news for fleets as well. “We have been running our entire fleet on B20 biodiesel blends for the past seven years in order to meet state requirements for alternative fuel use, and because it is the right thing to do to help clean up our environment,” said James Morwood, Fleet Services Manager for the Las Vegas Valley Water District. “In some cases that has meant exceeding the biodiesel blend level recommended by some of the automakers represented in our fleet. It is reassuring to know that those automakers now have the ASTM specifications they have said they need in order for them to fully support B20 use.”

The approval of ASTM specifications for inclusion of up to 5% biodiesel (B5) in the regular diesel fuel pool also means that biodiesel could soon become more readily available at retail fueling stations nationwide.

The ASTM International Main Committee also approved a fourth set of specifications for inclusion of B5 biodiesel in heating oil. Marketed as Bioheat®, biodiesel is gaining popularity as a home heating oil, particularly in the Northeast United States.

Biodiesel is a domestically produced, renewable alternative to diesel fuel and can be made from plant oils, animal fats, recycled cooking oils or new sources such as algae. Biodiesel must be properly processed to meet the approved ASTM specifications regardless of the feedstock used to produce it. Biodiesel blends up to B20 meeting ASTM specifications can be used in any diesel engine without modifications, and nearly all major automakers and engine manufacturers in the U.S. currently accept the use of at least B5, with some such as Caterpillar, Cummins, John Deere and New Holland already accepting blends of B20 or higher. Several more companies are expected to raise their approvals to B20 now that the final ASTM specifications for B6-B20 blends have been approved.

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For more information about biodiesel, including manufacturers’ warranty positions for its use, visit www.biodiesel.org. This material sponsored by the USDA Biodiesel Education Program.