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NEWS

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New Biodiesel Blend Specifications Published by ASTM International *Specs for Finished Blends Help Facilitate Commerce for Biodiesel Industry*

Jefferson City, MO – Biodiesel is reaching new heights as a proven fuel, bolstered by new quality specifications for biodiesel blends published by ASTM International. Biodiesel producers, petroleum companies, engine companies, vehicle manufacturers, pipeline operators, fleets and consumers will benefit from the new biodiesel blend specifications, using them for fuel preparation, quality checking, engine design, and bid and purchasing contracts.

ASTM International, one of the largest and most highly regarded standards development organizations in the world, has now officially published the highly anticipated biodiesel blend specifications on the ASTM website www.astm.org for general use. The new biodiesel blend specifications include:

- **ASTM D975-08a, Specification for Diesel Fuel Oils** — used for on- and off-road diesel applications; revised to include requirements for up to 5 percent biodiesel.
- **ASTM D396-08b, Specification for Fuel Oils** — used for home heating and boiler applications; revised to include requirements for up to 5 percent biodiesel.
- **ASTM D7467-08, Specification for Diesel Fuel Oil, Biodiesel Blend (B6 to 20)** — a completely new specification that covers finished fuel blends of between 6 (B6) and 20 (B20) percent biodiesel for on- and off-road diesel engine use.

ASTM International also approved some updates to the existing ASTM standard for biodiesel, ASTM D6751, which is designed to control pure biodiesel (B100) product quality prior to blending with conventional diesel fuel.

The rigorous ASTM process yielded stringent specifications to help ensure the availability of high quality biodiesel blends in the marketplace.

Bob McCormick, Principal Engineer on Fuels Performance at the National Renewable Energy Laboratory (NREL), said, “The new ASTM standards for biodiesel blends are the result of years of negotiation between the various parties at ASTM and years of research on how the properties of biodiesel blends affect engine performance. NREL has conducted extensive research over the past 4 years to support development of these standards, which we believe will lead to an expansion of markets for biodiesel while at the same time ensuring that users have trouble-free performance.” This research was jointly supported by the U.S. Department of Energy and the National Biodiesel Board (NBB) under a Cooperative Research and Development Agreement.

The ASTM specifications provide details on requirements for fuel characteristics as well as the relevant standard test methods to use for each. The new biodiesel standards apply to all finished biodiesel blends, regardless of the type of feedstock used to make the fuel.

Steve Howell, Technical Director for the NBB and Chairman of the ASTM Biodiesel Task Force, noted that the specifications are set on a performance basis for a diesel engine, not on the feedstock or the production process. “These specifications combine the input of engine interests, petroleum interests, and biodiesel interests, as well as government and military representatives, researchers and academics. It took cooperation and a lot of data and information sharing between all those parties to reach consensus. This is an important achievement for the biodiesel industry that will help move us forward.”

The official publication of the new biodiesel blend specifications is welcome news to automakers and engine manufacturers, who have been requesting a finished blend specification for B20 biodiesel blends for several years. Some companies, such as Chrysler LLC, had stated that the need for that spec was the single greatest hurdle preventing their full-scale acceptance of B20 use in their diesel vehicles. Chrysler 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.

Biodiesel producers are also cognizant of the many benefits the new biodiesel blend standards hold for the industry. Joan McKinney of FutureFuel Chemical Company said, “FutureFuel expects the increased support of key stakeholders, such as engine and vehicle manufacturers and fuel refiners, resulting from the new blend standards to generate continued robust growth in our biodiesel sales.”

FutureFuel Chemical Company is one of the 30 companies currently certified as a BQ-9000 accredited biodiesel producer. The biodiesel industry’s BQ-9000 program couples the foundations of universally accepted quality management systems with the ASTM product specifications, and has become the premier quality designation in the industry.

Biodiesel is a domestically produced, renewable alternative to diesel fuel and can be made from plant oils, animal fats, recycled restaurant grease or new sources such as algae. Biodiesel blends up to B20 (20% biodiesel blended with 80% Ultra Low Sulfur Diesel) meeting ASTM specifications can be used in diesel engines with few or no modifications. All major automakers and engine manufacturers in the U.S. currently accept the use of at least B5, and 50 percent of U.S. manufacturers already accept the use of B20 blends or higher in at least some of their equipment. Several more companies are expected to raise their approvals to B20 now that the final ASTM specifications for B6-B20 blends have been approved and published.

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For more information about biodiesel, including manufacturers’ warranty positions for its use, visit www.biodiesel.org. The ASTM International biodiesel standards can be purchased from ASTM Customer Service (Phone: 610-832-9585; service@astm.org) or at www.astm.org.