

Standard Gasoil (red diesel) will be changing on January 1st 2011. Are you ready for this specification change? Portland Fuel Price Protection, fuel supply chain consultants, highlight some of the main points you should be aware of.

Q: Fuel change? What fuel change?

A: The specification of red diesel, which currently contains 1000ppm of sulphur, is going to change and this will alter some of the characteristics of the fuel. It will be replaced by 10ppm sulphur gas oil, known as sulphur-free. The change has been timed to coincide with the introduction of the new Tier 3b engines that meet tougher emissions regulations.

Q: Will the reduced level of sulphur cause engine problems?

A: Though the reduction in sulphur does mean it has less ability to provide lubrication, fuel manufacturers put in additives to compensate. Cars and trucks have been running on it for years.

Q: So what's different about the new fuel?

A: It's now the same fuel as normal (white) road diesel except that it still has the red dye added. As well as the reduced sulphur content, it may also have up to 7% biodiesel (sometimes referred to as FAME - Fatty Acid Methyl Ester) added, whereas in the past, red diesel typically did not contain elements of FAME.

Q: How will this effect me?

Biodiesel may be more environmentally friendly than mineral diesel, but it has some drawbacks:

- It breaks down faster than mineral diesel so you shouldn't leave it sitting in the fuel store for as long.
- It pulls in moisture from the air (hygroscopic), which encourages small quantities of water to build up in the fuel store.
- It provides a source of nutrition for the bacteria that already exist in the fuel and encourages them to multiply, which in turn blocks fuel filters.
- The biodiesel fraction will degrade over time, though the exact timescale is hard to pin down. Six months to a year seems the general feeling, but the main thing is to turn your fuel stock over as quickly as possible.
- **Cost** – You can expect to see a 1-2ppl increase over your existing gasoil price. However, movements in the base price of fuel have a much more significant impact on overall price and these can be controlled via Fuel Price Protection (sometimes called Fuel Hedging).

Q: So it would be a good idea to fit a filter to my fuel tank?

Yes. If you have any bug growth, the right type of filter will stop most of it passing through to the vehicle tank where it will be more difficult to deal with. There may be other impurities already in the tank as well - over time, dirt will accumulate in the tank and generally settles on the bottom. Water will build up too, unless drained off.

Q: How do I know if I have a problem?

A: First off, you need to do a water test, which costs about £12 and shows you how much water there is in your fuel store. If you haven't got a filter on the diesel store you can buy one for about £50 with a replaceable £8 element. It fits between the tap and the start of the hose so you don't need to drain down the tank.

Q: How can I find out more?

A. Portland Fuel Price Protection are experts on the fuel industry and we are always on hand to offer help and advice on any fuel related issues. So if you any burning questions relating to any of the above or would like to learn more about how you can stabilise your fuel costs, contact the Portland team on 01904 570021. Alternatively, visit our website at www.portland-fuel-price-protection.com

