

Hybrid Vote

CARB to Vote This Month on New Regulatory Plan To Admit the Merits of Hybrid Electric Drivetrains

California continues to lead the charge toward cleaner vehicles, with the state's Air Resources Board set to vote this month on a new test and certification procedure that admits the fundamental merits of hybrid electric drivetrains in transit buses.

Tests now cover only the emission from engines, with no recognition that a hybrid drive allows for smaller engines which, burning less fuel, and in many vehicles running at near-constant speeds, admit less pollutants. Vehicles can be approved only a case-by-case basis — not good enough to establish a market. “This will establish a testing procedure and actual certification procedure” for multiple vehicles, advises CARB’s Elise Keddie, of the agency’s mobile source control division in Sacramento.

CARB staff has proposed a three-year program, for bus model years 2004-2006, based on SAE Recommended Practice SAE J2711, which tests heavy-duty hybrid vehicle emissions using a chassis dynamometer.

Also active in the hybrid drive issue, working to get the federal EPA to move (perhaps along the lines of California), is the Boston-based Northeast Advanced Vehicle Consortium.

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CARB is slated to vote on the interim hybrid bus rule at an **October 24** board meeting in Los Angeles (El Monte).

Ford Extends 2003 Incentives

Fleet Rebate of \$1,000 Per Vehicle Now Available Until Year-End

Ford said late last week that it’s extending a rebate of \$1,000.00 per vehicle for fleet buyers of model year 2003 gaseous fuel vehicles until **December 31**.

The company says it’ll be able to more effectively and expeditiously fill orders if it gets them sooner. “What happens every year is that we get a rush of orders late in the first quarter and then we can’t fill them all,” says Southern California fleet sales specialist Scott Ruhlen.

The rebate extension is a way of getting those orders in hand sooner.

Ford is promoting the following gaseous-fueled vehicles for model year 2003:

- dedicated CNG F-150 pickup;
- bi-fuel CNG F-150 pickup; • bi-fuel propane F-150 pickup;
- E-Series van/wagon; • dedicated CNG Crown Victoria sedan; and
- E-Series cutaway chassis for parcel delivery, shuttle or school bus use.

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Vegas APTA

The American Public Transportation Association’s meeting in Las Vegas late last month saw an impressive array of electric drive and natural gas-fueled vehicles — shown not to clean air advocates but to real transit fleet operators.

Sessions on alternative fuel, emissions reduction, and hybrid vehicles were among the best attended at the tri-annual event.

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Oil & Water

CARB Verifies Aquazole Advantages, French Seek North American Producer
France's TotalFinaElf has gotten California Air Resources Board approval for its "Aquazole" brand diesel-water emulsion to be marketed as an alternative diesel in the state, making users of the product eligible for alt fuel incentives.

TFE says it's looking for North American licensees for the product, which is meanwhile being promoted by the Adept Group, a Los Angeles-based engineering firm with extensive alternative fuel and advanced drivetrain development experience.

'No Engine Mods Whatsoever'

The product "requires no modifications whatsoever to existing diesel engines," Adept says.

Aquazole is described as "a series of formulations" by Adept president Alex Spataru. It allows diesel and water to mixed at a ratio of about six to one. The resulting fuel has been found by CARB to cut NOx emissions by some 16 percent.

"The CARB verification letter marks the culmination of three years of intense dedicated work in France, California, and in Texas," Adept says, stating that Aquazole cuts particulate emissions by some 60 percent. "We're open to anything that makes sense at this point," Spataru says of the quest for North

American licensees for the TFE product.

His company is also looking to do more North American trials, in part to help establish a pricing structure. He told *F&F* last week that while Aquazole will cost more than straight diesel, it will cost less than competing emulsion products.

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Xebec Gets ISO Nod

Canada's Xebec has been awarded an ISO 9001 (2000) certificate for the manufacture of its regenerative desiccant natural gas dryers. The firm builds the equipment at a 45,000-square-foot plant in Blainville, Que.

The Xebec dryers "can be provided in accordance with many pressure vessel design codes," the company says, noting that they achieve pressure dewpoints as low as -70°C (-100°F) at up to 5,000 psi, or 345 bar. Xebec offers three product ranges. An HRBNGX series automatic heat reactivated twin tower natural gas dryer is shown here.



Xebec cites ISO literature pointing to low water dewpoint temperature as the "single most important safety requirement of compressed natural gas."

That's because water in the gas can react with traces of carbon dioxide and hydrogen sulfide, leading to formation of corrosive compounds that can damage high pressure tanks from within. Water in the gas can also interfere with vehicle fuel systems. Xebec has supplied gas drying equipment for upwards of 600 NGV fueling stations in North America and the Far East.

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CNG Seen Safer in Mesa

The City of Mesa, Ariz. has added three dozen more dedicated-CNG Crown Victorias to its police fleet, in large part because it sees the NGVs as safer than gasoline cars.

"The CNG-dedicated Crown Victorias have never experienced any fuel-tank-related safety problems," the City says, referring to the recent tragic loss of Chandler police officer Robert Neilson, "who died recently in a Crown Victoria post-collision fire."

Even prior to the latest buy, Mesa claimed the most CNG police cars in the state: 184 dedicated NGVs out of 293 total (most are which are bi-fuel). The new CNG Crown Vics are replacing 36 gasoline-fueled cars.

Mesa's gasoline patrol cars are being fitted with new fuel tank safety bladders.

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