

Self-Directed Blender Ethanol Pumps Create Confusion; Consumers and Retailers Require Better Education, More Oversight, says AIISAFE

AIISAFE members welcome EPA's recent enforcement letter addressing the need for proper labeling, potential harm from 'mid-level' ethanol in gasoline-only vehicles and engines

Alexandria, VA – September 3, 2008 – The Alliance for a Safe Alternative Fuels Environment (AIISAFE), www.allsafe-fuel.org, today announced its support of a recently issued enforcement letter from the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) addressing self-directed blender pumps at retail outlets and the risks involved when using fuel blends containing more than 10 percent ethanol.

The recent EPA letter states that "gasoline containing more than 10 percent ethanol may cause damage to certain emissions control devices and systems and increased emissions from gasoline-only vehicles and engines. For this reason, the Clean Air Act prohibits retail gasoline stations from selling gasoline blended with more than 10 percent ethanol for use in gasoline-only vehicles and engines." The letter also states that EPA will be taking steps to investigate the retail distribution of non-compliant fuel.

"We are very pleased to see this letter go out from the EPA. The proliferation of ethanol blender pumps at retail outlets in some regions of the country pose potentially serious problems for consumers and manufacturers alike," said Kris Kiser, spokesman for AIISAFE.

At issue is the fact that current blender pumps allow users to select various levels of ethanol when dispensing fuel. Yet, current law only allows ethanol levels from up to 10 percent (E10) for general purpose fuel and up to 85 percent (E85) for use in "flexible fuel" automobiles. Many pumps are inadequately labeled, so consumers are often unaware that ethanol levels above 10 percent are only recommended for "flexible fuel vehicles." AIISAFE recommends that consumers check their owner's manuals or with the manufacturer to identify the proper fuel for their vehicle or product.

"Current labeling fails to properly inform the consumer of the potential harm that a "mid-level" ethanol blend may do to an automobile, motorcycle, boat, chainsaw, lawn mower, ATV, snowmobile, generator or any other engine product," added Kiser. "It is not simply a recommendation, but in fact, it is a violation of federal law to dispense fuels with greater than 10 percent ethanol in anything but a flexible fuel vehicle."

The Energy Independence and Security Act enacted last year by the U.S. Congress mandates the use of substantially more ethanol in the fuels marketplace. The U.S. Department of Energy, EPA and industry have begun testing various ethanol blends on vehicles and engine products to determine their effects. Only flexible fuel automobiles are designed to run on fuel blends above E-10. Using blends beyond the legal E10 in vehicles and products not designed to handle higher ethanol levels will likely void manufacturers' warranties and may result in safety risks to the user and performance irregularities.

“There are currently insufficient test data to permit a change in law allowing the general use of higher ethanol blends in conventional vehicles and products,” stressed Kiser. “Without better consumer education, retailers may face a consumer backlash by using the wrong fuel in their products. We do not wish to see a repeat of the consumer backlash against ethanol fuels that occurred in the 1970s during the oil embargo.”

ALLSAFE members do not object to increasing the overall amount of ethanol used in the nation’s gasoline supply as long as the amount of ethanol for sale to the general public does not exceed the legal and recommended 10 percent per gallon, or 85 percent per gallon for specially designed flexible fuel vehicles.

About AIISAFE

AIISAFE is made up of the national consumer, manufacturing, and gasoline retailer associations (listed below) that consume gasoline and ethanol fuel blends. AIISAFE speaks on fuel-related legislation for over 250 million Americans that own and operate over 400 million products, including recreational boats and marine engines, chainsaws, lawnmowers, motor vehicles, motorcycles, all terrain vehicles (ATVs), snowmobiles, generators, and related vehicles and equipment. For more information, go to <http://allsafe-fuel.org/>.

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Alliance of Automobile Manufacturers	Motorcycle Industry Council
American Motorcyclist Association	National Association of Convenience Stores
Association of Marina Industries	National Marine Manufacturers Association
Association of International Automobile Manufacturers	Outdoor Power Equipment Institute
Boat Owners Association of the United States	Personal Watercraft Industry Association
Engine Manufacturers Association	Professional Landcare Network
	Specialty Vehicle Institute of America