



Ultra Low Sulfur Emission Diesel

Posted by [Glenn](#) on October 15, 2006 - 11:38am in [The Oil Drum: Local](#)

Topic: [Environment/Sustainability](#)

Tags: [diesel](#), [emissions](#), [oil](#), [peak oil](#) [[list all tags](#)]



In a long awaited and hard fought victory, the nation is set this weekend to [switch over almost all its diesel fuel to a new vastly lower sulfur content](#), setting the stage for major improvements in air quality, particularly in dense urban areas like NYC that rely heavily on trucks to deliver goods to our stores and houses.

The new fuel contains 15 parts per million of sulfur, down from the standard of 500 parts per million, thanks to changes in the refining process. As of Sunday, at least 80 percent of the diesel available for trucks and buses has to meet the new standard.

What makes this victory for cleaner air even better was that this was one of those rare instances where environmental lobbyists, government and industry found common ground to cooperate on a long term strategy to define regulations they could all agree to. This is not common and needs to be recognized when it happens.

But the full benefits will not take effect immediately. In the short term, the impact on particulate emissions will only decline by 10 percent, but with all new diesel engines built to take advantage of the new fuel, particulate emissions are expected to drop considerably as the older engines are phased out.

Old diesel engines burning the cleaner fuel will reduce dangerous particulate emissions by 10 percent, experts say. New engines with improved controls, which have to be available by Jan. 1, will cut this particulate pollution by more than 95 percent. The rule mandates more improved engines in 2010. It is unclear how soon existing trucks and buses, which often are in use for more than 10 years, will be turned in for newer models. The new fuel is expected to cost 3 cents to 5 cents more per gallon.

While the Bush administration is trying to take full credit for this victory, this regulation was initially started in the last days of the Clinton Administration.

Like many regulations that took effect in the twilight of the Clinton administration, the diesel rule, covering fuel and the seven million trucks and buses on the roads, was temporarily stayed by the Bush administration. Then the Environmental Protection Agency allowed it to proceed and in 2004 supplemented it with a similar rule requiring tight controls on engines in off-road equipment like cranes, tractors and construction equipment.

Carol M. Browner, the administrator who signed the original rule, bristled on Tuesday at the Bush administration's proprietary attitude.

"The best they can do in environmental policy," Ms. Browner asked, "is take credit for someone else's work?"

While the article did not mention anything about whether this new refining process can be applied to some of the other methods of producing diesel from biomass, coal or tar sands, but I would assume it would at least help. I will investigate and put it in the comments section when I do. It would be interesting to compare the emissions from the new ultra low sulfur diesel in new engines designed to work with it versus biomass, coal or tar sand derived diesel.



This work is licensed under a [Creative Commons Attribution-Share Alike 3.0 United States License](http://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-sa/3.0/).