

Fleet Operator on Biodiesel: It'd Be Ridiculous Not to Use It

S.K. Davison, Inc. uses biodiesel in all its diesel-powered vehicles, from tractor-trailers to mowers.



Ed Davison has a question for fleets not running on biodiesel blends: Why not?

"What is your argument for not doing it? You want as much black smoke coming out of your exhaust as you can get? You want the dirtiest emissions of anybody out here?" asks Davison, who co-owns central Illinois hauler S.K. Davison, Inc. with his wife, Sharon. "When it costs nothing to clean up the environment, it would just be absolutely ridiculous to not do it."

Davison has heard the arguments from fleet managers, especially those with small fleets similar in size to his. They worry about the effect of biodiesel on vehicle performance and warranties, despite OEM acceptance of biodiesel being nearly unanimous, and they worry about cost. But he has answers to those arguments based on more than a decade of experience with biodiesel.

"I use a B20 blend in absolutely everything that's diesel-powered that we have," he says. "I've never noticed a problem in anything."

More than a decade of satisfaction with biodiesel.

At S.K. Davison, Inc., that's a fleet of about two dozen vehicles. The bulk of them are tractor-trailers, but they also have several dump trucks, a bulldozer and a backhoe for construction work, and some road maintenance mowers. S.K. Davison, Inc.'s primary business is hauling agricultural products for farmers and asphalt and aggregates for construction companies.

Davison was first introduced to biodiesel about 15 years ago, when his fuel provider started offering a B2 blend. They assured him it would work, but he had many of the same concerns he's heard others express. None of them ever came to be.

"I've got a 1977 Cat D6 bulldozer out there, and it works just fine. And biodiesel works in my 2015 Detroit Diesel engine," he says. "So it works in everything."

Year-round use of biodiesel has financial and environmental benefits.

Not only does biodiesel perform well, but it also has financial advantages. Biodiesel blends of 11 percent and higher are exempt from Illinois' 6.25 percent sales tax. Davison also likes that using biodiesel adds value to the products of the same farmers who use his hauling services.

S.K. Davison, Inc. went to a B11 blend in 2005 and B20 in 2012. It now uses B20 year-round, including in the heart of the cold Illinois winters. Cold weather or warm, the fuel performs.

In Davison's mind, the biggest benefits of using biodiesel are related to the environment. Biodiesel is renewable and a cleaner-burning alternative to petroleum diesel. He says it's usually easier to do things the old way, but fleets of all sizes need to recognize the impact of their decisions.

"I know biodiesel works. It's better for the environment. And I'm not going to look my grandkids in the face and go, 'Grandpa had a choice and chose not to do anything for your future.'"

Ed Davison
Owner of S.K. Davison, Inc.