

ODA Begins Testing Motor Fuel Quality

The long-awaited, much-anticipated inspection program for gasoline sold in Oregon is finally ready to begin. The Oregon Department of Agriculture's 14 inspectors with the Measurement Standards Division will now begin checking samples of gasoline sold at the pump for octane and oxygenates.

"Oregon will now join the ranks of other states that provide some quality assurance for consumers -- that motor fuel products in Oregon will meet certain standards," says ODA director Bruce Andrews.

"Federal studies show that the mere presence of a gas testing program significantly reduces the incidence of mislabeled fuel," says Roger Graybeal, President of Oregon AAA.

Past surveys conducted by ODA and, more recently, the Secretary of State's Office have questioned the quality of gasoline sold in Oregon. While there may be a whole host of problems with gasoline, one of the biggest complaints from motorists is receiving fuel that does not meet the octane level advertised at the pump.

The result can certainly harm the performance of an internal combustion engine.

The issue of mislabeling the gasoline is something the new program is designed to address.

"Buying a car is the second largest investment most consumers ever make," says Graybeal. "Mislabeled fuel can significantly shorten the life of that investment and lead to more frequent repairs."

The screening program is made possible through an award of more than \$292,000 by the State Attorney General as part of an oil company overcharge settlement reached with the state a couple of years ago. Although the money won't provide for complete testing of motor fuel in Oregon, it should give the state a snapshot of gasoline quality as it relates to octane and oxygenates.

It will be up to ODA inspectors to do the checking as part of their routine inspection of gasoline pumps at some 2,000 licensed establishments in Oregon. Fuel pumps are already checked for accuracy of quantity

delivered. Now with the help of a hand held portable unit that passes infrared light through the gasoline, a sample can be tested for octane level in a matter of minutes. Each inspector will carry one of the \$10,000 analyzers as part of their tools for

line's octane level must be within seven-tenths of the whole number listed as the fuel's octane rating. For instance, a sample of 92 reproducibility standard of ASTM, the American Society for Testing and Materials, be outside the national standards

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assistant administrator of ODA's Measurement Standards Division.

normal gas pump inspection.

"Our inspectors will draw a sample and run it through the analyzer to determine if the octane is the same as what is posted at the pump and whether or not it meets ASTM standards for reproducibility," says George Shefcheck, assistant administrator of ODA's Measurement Standards Division.

What that means is that the gaso-

and would be subject to further testing.

"If it falls below the standard, we would draw an official sample and send it to an official laboratory for further verification," says Shefcheck.

An independent laboratory with the ability to verify octane levels will do the actual testing as opposed to the initial screening provided by ODA's new machines. If the lab

confirms a violation, the results will then be turned over to the Oregon Attorney General's Office for potential civil action.

ODA has purchased two separate units at \$20,000 each that will have the ability to check for oxygenates in motor fuel.

Ethers and alcohols have been blended in gasoline to enhance octane as well as provide for cleaner air.

Drivability of the vehicle can be affected by the oxygenate in the fuel.

While ODA is expected to check all gasoline pumps in Oregon for octane at least once during the life of the two-year funding, inspectors will also respond to specific complaints from consumers although the ability to provide rapid response will be limited because of a lack of funds.

Still, the program should be very worthwhile, according to Director Andrews.

"This should be viewed as a plus for consumers and for the industry," he says. "This will affirm product integrity and will help identify any

persons who may be abusing the system when it comes to motor fuel quality."

Details of the program were hammered out in cooperation of ODA, AAA, and petroleum industry officials.

What happens when the two year program is over? Depending on the results of the screening, it is expected that the State Legislature will be asked to establish a permanent motor fuel quality program.

At the very least, lawmakers may be asked to authorize the adoption of the national standards for motor fuel quality as part of state standards, just like Oregon's neighboring states have done.

The program will not cure all ills. It will help.

"Drivability of an automobile depends on many things and motor fuel is just one of those things," says Andrews. "We won't be able to solve everyone's problems, but we will have a better idea of what the gasoline may be like out there thanks to this program."

Riding Tri-Met Easier For Non-English Speakers

No Habla Ingles?

No problem. Those who don't speak English now have two new ways to find out how to ride Tri-Met.

The first is viewing a how-to-ride videotape produced in several languages. Translations include Spanish, Russian, Korean, Vietnamese and Chinese-Mandarin.

Versions in English and captioned English are also available. The eight-minute tape is available at numerous agencies and organizations throughout the tri-county area and can be obtained at no cost by groups.

The tape explains the fundamentals of riding buses, MAX light rail and the Tri-Met LIFT, which provides door-to-door rides for people with disabili-

ties.

Also new, Tri-Met customer service representatives now provide information for customers in the same five languages. The services is possible with the assistance of AT&T translators, who join in the three-way call with the customer and Tri-Met representative.

"To provide service to our increasingly diverse community, we're making it easier for non-English speaking customers to ride Tri-Met," said Barbara Edelman, Tri-Met's project coordinator. "By making it easier for everyone to ride Tri-Met we're giving them more choices, more opportunities and more freedom."

The free videotape is available to groups by calling Tri-Met

at 238-4926. All are welcome to copy the tape. The tape, produced with the assistance of Clackamas, Multnomah and Washington counties and the state Aging Services Division, is available at these organizations:

- Aging Services Division (Belmont & Hillsboro offices)
- Oregon Employment Division (downtown Portland)
- Oregon Adult & Family Services (east and southeast divisions)
- YMCA Senior Services (southeast 122nd)
- Oregon Public Health (Oregon City)
- International Refugee Center of Oregon
- Asian Family Center
- Jewish Family and Childrens Services

Those wishing to call a cus-

tom service representative should call 238-RIDE and indicate the language translation needed to the customer service specialist. The customer service specialist will link with AT&T for a three-way translated conversation. Those who call the Tri-Met LIFT program at 233-LIFT can also get the same translation services. The LIFT program provides door-to-door rides for people who have disabilities.

In 1992, Tri-Met introduced a multilingual brochure that provides how-to-ride information in 11 languages. Translations include Japanese, Chinese, Korean, Laotian, Mien, Spanish, Russian, Romanian, Vietnamese and Cambodian. The brochures are available at customer service outlets and on buses and MAX.



The Story of Ruby Bridges (Scholastic, Inc.): a picture book by Robert Coles and illustrated by George Ford, tells the story of the girl who desegregated the New Orleans Public School system. she had to be escorted to and from schools for months while being confronted by angry parents and protesters. White families boycotted the schools and pulled all their children out of Ruby's class. The book received a Coretta Scott King award.

Nuclear Weapon Disposal Options Considered

Oregonians told the U.S. Department of Energy (USDOE) how they think the federal government should safely store and dispose of surplus plutonium from dismantled nuclear weapons on April 10. A group of community leaders from across the state will meet with federal officials.

As the Cold War ended, the United States and Russia agreed to large reductions in nuclear weapons. The U.S. expects to dismantle up to 1,500 weapons a year through the end of

the decade.

From these dismantled weapons, the U.S. must find a way to get rid of some 50 tons of plutonium that is no longer needed.

USDOE recently completed a study which looks at the environmental risks associated with several proposed disposal options. Hanford in southeast Washington could be used to conduct these activities. The options include:

- Mixing the plutonium with uranium fuel to use in a nuclear reactor.
- Mixing the plutonium with high-

level radioactive waste and immobilizing it in a glass, ceramic or other form.

- Burying the plutonium deep underground in geologically stable rock formations.

As the lead state agency on radiological issues, the Oregon Department of Energy (ODOE) is concerned about the impact of past and present Hanford activities on the Columbia River. ODOE's Nuclear Safety Division Administrator Mary Lou Blazek says "Using Hanford to store or dispose of surplus plutonium could

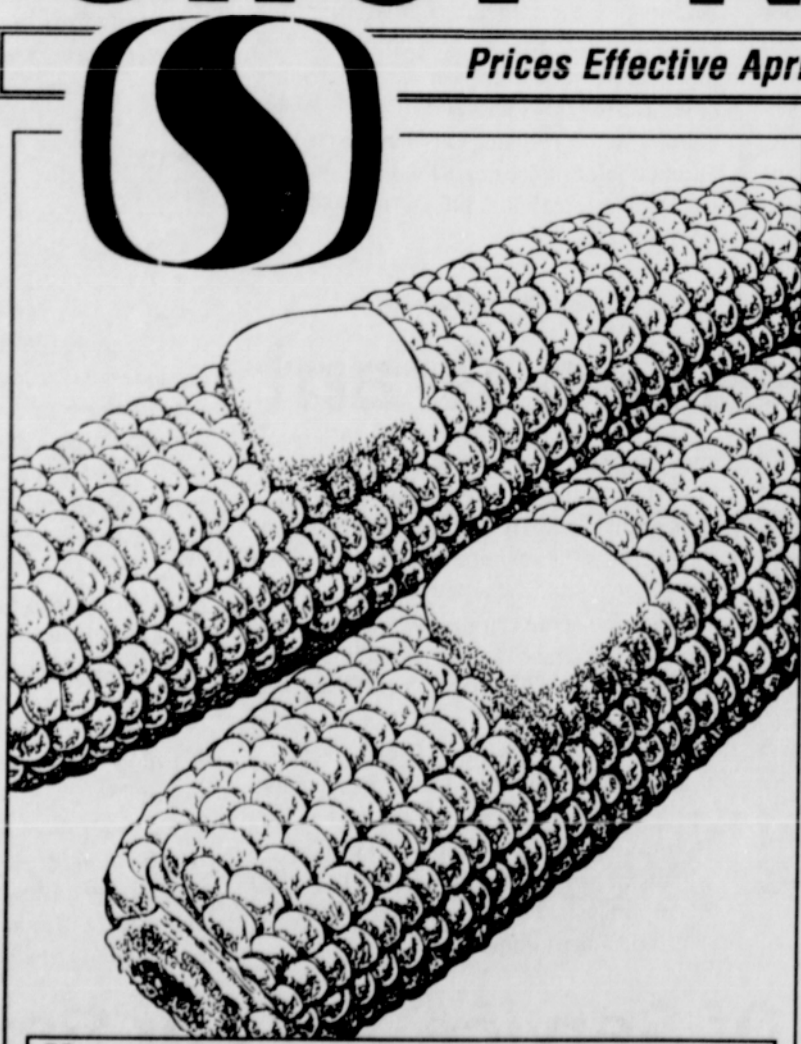
increase the transportation of radioactive materials through Oregon."

Hanford is only 35 miles from the Oregon border. The Columbia River flows for about 50 miles through Hanford and then flows for 300 miles along the Oregon and Washington border.

The public comment period for USDOE's environmental study ends May 7. As part of the review process, USDOE will hold eight public meetings across the country from now until April 30.

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