

# CA hospital saves money burning environmentally safe soybean oil

St. Mary Medical Center in Long Beach, CA, is believed to be the first facility of any type in the country to operate its boilers on an environmentally friendly blend of soybean oil expected to save the hospital \$50-\$400 a day as an alternative to natural gas.

The hospital is already saving \$50 - \$100 a day since it started using the soybean blend a few weeks ago, St. Mary's facilities director, Mike Mathis, told AHA News. If natural gas prices return this coming winter to about \$14 per decatherm as they were last month, the hospital would save \$350 - \$400 a day, he said.

Soybean oil and other biodiesels have been used to run trucks and buses but emitted too much nitrogen oxide to meet environmental standards for other uses, he said.

The hospital was looking for a cheaper alternative to the synthetic diesel used to run its emergency generators when it learned a local fuel distributor, Supreme Oil, was testing an additive that lowers biodiesel emissions, Mathis said.

Hospital engineers began working with the company to test the product in the hospital's generators and boilers, eventually perfecting a blend that not only met the region's emissions standards but burned cleaner than natural gas, he said.

The hospital part of Catholic Healthcare West, plans to continue using the fuel as long as it meets emission standards and the price advantage remains, Mathis said, other CHW facilities may also use it, he said.

Any hospital with a boiler that can operate on either natural gas

or liquid fuel would be able to operate on soybean oil, said Chris Sellars, the Supreme Oil Representative who worked with St. Mary to develop and test the blend. California hospitals are required by law to have at least one such boiler that can service the entire facility in the event of an earthquake, he said.

Supreme and St. Mary tested various additives with the oil until one made by RXP Products Inc. in St. Petersburg, FL, did the trick, Sellars said. Supreme has the exclusive U.S. rights to use the additive in biodiesel, he said. The distributor gets the soybean oil from Illinois, mixes it with the additive, then distributes the blend by tanker truck like gasoline.

For more information contact Sellars at (310) 549-3161

- Mary Ann Costello

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