

Bio-fuels not so great

Dear Editor,

Re the article by Chris Harrison on "Alternative fuels power next wave of equipment" (Jan. '08, p. 40): Mr. Harrison states that "Emissions from bio-fuels and biodiesel blends are lower than petroleum-based diesel fuels making them more environmentally friendly." This statement is totally false.

In fact, bio-fuels (ethanol) and biodiesel often burn less efficiently and pollute more than most petroleum-based fuels. This type of "Al Gore" reporting that selectively ignores data that shows these fuels, while being an alternative to petroleum-based fuels and lessening our dependence on foreign oil, are not always cheaper or cleaner. The additives that have to be put into the biodiesel fuel tanks, to keep it from growing bacteria, are even worse at polluting the air when it is burned.

Mr. Harrison should have checked the facts (all the facts) instead of writing a "sexy green" article that gives many in our industry incomplete information. I am all for lessening our dependence on foreign oil and being good stewards of the environment, but let's be wise in how we do it. It is not a quick fix, and this type of article fuels the fire that the "feel good" fix is just around the corner, and does not address the economics. [For example] the installation of an underground, 500-gallon biodiesel storage tank, if a permit can be obtained (currently Los Angeles County will not issue any permits for biodiesel storage tanks) costs a minimum of \$50,000. These costs, plus the current information coming from several fleet managers who are now seeing more frequent servicing on equipment using biodiesel, should make us all "look before we leap."

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