


ews Headline: Oil dealers move to supply biofuel blend |  

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News OCR Text: Vermont's heating oil dealers are touting the benefits of bio heat - heating oil blended with biodegradable, organic materials such as soybean oil.

Matt Cota of the Vermont Fuel Dealers Association said a bio blend is better for the environment because of its low sulfur emissions. For homeowners and businesses, he said the blended heating oil lowers oil burner maintenance costs.

Cota said about 20 heating oil dealers in the state sell the bio heat blend, which can safely be burned in existing heating systems.

Heating oil groups from around the Northeast met in Baltimore last month and endorsed the adoption of a mandatory minimum 2 percent blend of the cleaner burning heating oil by July.

"It's a very progressive and proactive step by the industry, from South Carolina to Maine, to endorse, support and encourage federal and state bodies to enact essentially a provision which everyone is selling the same high quality, environmentally friendly product," said Cota, executive director of the Vermont Fuel Dealers Association.

Cota said seven states have bio-blended mandates with Massachusetts requiring all home heating oil sold in the state to meet the new standard by July.

A B2, or 2 percent blend of biofuel and heating oil, is the starting point with the goal of increasing the blend over time, Cota said.

Low-sulfur diesel fuel is available for motor vehicles because of federal regulations requiring the use of cleaner burning fuel. Home heating oil is basically diesel fuel but with a higher sulfur content.

In conjunction with the call for a bio-blend mandate, Cota said also coming out of the Baltimore meeting was a push toward the production of low sulfur

home heating oil.

"What we're saying is we want the same clean fuel delivered as heating oil product," he said.

He said heating oil burns nearly 95 percent cleaner with greenhouse gas emissions approximately one-third of 1970 levels. He said more than 350,000 Vermonters heat with oil.

As far as cost, Cota said bio heat adds an average of 6 cents a gallon to a homeowner's fuel bill. But again Cota made the point that because it's a cleaner-burning fuel, oil burner upkeep is less. He said using an average of 800 gallons a year, a homeowner would pay an additional \$40 to \$50 a year for bio heat.

He said prices would fall as bio heat became more widely available.

Keyser Energy in Rutland has been selling bio heat for three years. Following an initial burst of interest, Chris Keyser said only a couple of new customers a year ask for it.

"It's been slow on the uptake," he said.

Keyser said customers pay a 5 cents per gallon premium for the blend of biofuel and low-sulfur heating oil. He said most of the premium covers transportation costs.

Bourne's Inc. in Morrisville has been selling a 2 percent bio heat blend for a couple of years.

"I see it as being a practical solution to part of the energy issues," said owner Peter Bourne. "I mean there's no silver bullet to the energy issues so this is one of the many things that needs to be done."

He said ideally the biofuel blend uses recycled greases and oils and as second choice soybeans or other crops.

Efforts are already underway to produce biodiesel and other biofuels in Vermont.

Bourne's Inc. recently received a \$45,000 grant for a biofuel blending facility in Morrisville.

The Vermont Sustainable Jobs Fund announced in August \$484,300 in grants to develop biofuels and to supply a portion of the state's energy needs. The Vermont Biofuels Initiative is funded through the U.S. Department of Energy, private foundation sources and a state appropriation.