

Diesel purifier makes its mark on SA

Consumer response shows good results, writes MEGAN POWER

AN IMPORTED fuel conditioning unit, which reverses the natural fuel deterioration process in diesel cars, trucks, cranes and boats, is establishing itself in the highly sceptical Southern African market.

The ceramic unit, which moves fuel over a magnetic surface and breaks up solid particles that cause inefficiencies, has gained acceptance from major companies, including Kempston Truck Hire and the National Ports Authority.

Kempston Truck Hire bought and installed units in 30 of its one-ton diesel LDVs in the Eastern Cape and KwaZulu-Natal in January. A decision to fit the new units on all new vehicles in the company's fleet will be made next year.

Since January, importer Clear Fuel Technologies has sold more than 1 300 of the Algae X units through its sub-distribution network in South Africa, Mozambique, Zimbabwe and Namibia.

Its claimed benefits include extended engine life, decreased fuel consumption and reduced emissions.

"It's been a difficult two years. There's a hell of a lot of scepticism regarding after-market products," says managing director Ron Mattig.

"But we're establishing track records with the serious boys in the various sectors and now it's time to establish a stronger sub-distribution network."

Caterpillar had accepted the system for installation on all its machinery without affecting its warranty, Mattig said.

"The quality of SA diesel is poor and the market has been flooded by so-called fuel cleaning and optimising products that, despite making all sorts of claims, have fallen short of expectations."

"Either they haven't worked or they have cost the customer more money," he says. As a counterweight, Mattig offers the units on a trial basis.

"It was either spend a fortune on traditional advertising or have faith in the product. Filtering is an essential ingredient to clean fuel but it's not the solution," he comments.

The units, launched in the US nine years ago, range from R1 200 to R40 000, depending on size.

Kempston Truck hire national fleet manager Avi Grunstein says: "We're getting favourable results."

"Judging by oil sampling and general maintenance requirements, it looks like we'll be able to let our vehicles run longer between service intervals once the warranty period has expired," he says. The company's main interest is to improve engine longevity.

Poor quality diesel means service intervals are far more frequent than in the US and Europe, Grunstein says.

"The only issue we have to address is whether or not a warranty would be valid with this system. I know it's something that is being addressed with manufacturers at the moment."

Grunstein admits he was sceptical at first. "There are so many fuel cleaning products on the market that all claim miracles . . . they don't work."

Marine operations manager for the National Port Authority in Durban, David Goliath, says the units are being used on several pilot boats and tugs.

"Since fitting the units, the fuel injector nozzles seem to have a lot less carbon build-up around the tips and the exhaust emission is clear under load."