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The Law of Unintended Consequences and Fuel Storage

Our industry has a lot to deal with this year! The safety of our family and friends, falling oil prices and lack of demand is stressful for many of us. I truly hope you are safe, healthy and that current events pass quickly as we eventually return to normalcy. We can't control much of what is going on, but we can plan for operational efficiency considering the specific industry issues we face.

The new fuel storage problem:

One issue that is directly affecting our industry are increasing inventories coupled with rapidly decreasing demand. The national "stay in place" policy has reduced fuel consumption greatly and now many of us have fuel tanks that are not turning over. Many airports are at capacity for jet fuel and some terminals aren't turning their tanks over, making it difficult for them to convert to summer grade fuel. When the economy picks up and our downstream customers begin taking more frequent fuel deliveries, they may receive fuel that is many months older than planned. One must consider where the fuel was stored and how long it was in storage. What were the conditions of the storage tank? Will there be unintended filter plugging or engine problems for your customers?

The useful life of stored fuel depends on various factors such as the length of storage, the temperature, exposure to air and water bottoms. For commercial fleets and retail heating oil systems, local storage tank conditions are very important. For heating oil systems, the presence of a copper return line (for high volume fuel systems) can act as a catalyst for fuel degradation since the fuel may already be aged beyond what was intended at manufacture. And even though ULSD is known to be more stable than prior diesel fuels, time and tank conditions will stress its quality. The potential for unplanned downtime cries out for vigilant tank maintenance if you want to avoid quality problems in the near future.

Most fuel treated at the refinery is not meant to last many months. It is expected that the fuel will be used within a short time. This situation is especially important during the final fill of the winter season, when most retail heating oil tanks are topped off for the summer. Another case is when the fuel is stored for a longer period for emergency use, as in standby generators and power plants.

At this point in time, there is an increased risk of fuel degradation occurring during storage. This can lead to rough running engines, inefficient burner operation or filter plugging or even a fuel system shutdown. This always seems to occur when the system is needed most. An example might be after the economy returns to normal and higher fuel throughputs cause filters to load up and plug sooner than they were designed to. In every case, you need the fuel to perform or you will have to deal with a disappointed customer.

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There is a solution:

We can change the fuel's characteristics so performs as your application dictates. This requires a multi-functional fuel additive. This additive will feature components that directly address each of the problems encountered with stored fuel. An excellent option is a fuel stabilizer to inhibit degradation, a water dispersant to remove water that may be present and inhibit microbial growth. A corrosion inhibitor will also protect fuel system components.

ET 2460 HEAT ASSURE Multi-Functional Fuel Oil Additive contains advanced technology additives that can clean and protect fuel storage systems. It will help stabilize bio-blends and distillates by dispersing accumulated sludge that formed in the fuel system. If water is present or enters the system, it will be safely removed. The added corrosion inhibitor will help protect tank bottoms. These components should increase storage life enough to eliminate many of the problems mentioned.

If you have any questions, we are here to help. Feel free to call and stay safe!

Sincerely,

Steve

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