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Quality Standards of the National Biodiesel Board

The best way to buy quality biodiesel is to buy it from a producer that is recommended by the National Biodiesel Board. It is a mistake to purchase homemade biodiesel from just anyone as it may have a volatile flash point (causing an unexpected fire in your diesel engine!) or it could have exaggerated solvent properties and scald and dissolve the components of your fuel pumps and diesel engine. The best idea is to purchase fuel only from a reputable source -- from companies that are 'certified marketers' or 'accredited producers' under the BQ-9000 Biodiesel Quality program.

The National Diesel Board is a very reputable organization that rates and approves companies that have this certification.

The National Biodiesel Board, the trade association for the biodiesel industry, has formed the National Biodiesel Accreditation Commission (NBAC) to audit biodiesel production and marketers in order to enforce fuel quality standards in the US. NBAC issues a 'Certified Biodiesel Marketer' seal of approval for biodiesel marketers that have met all requirements of fuel accreditation audits. This seal of approval assures customers that the biodiesel fuel meets the ASTM standards for biodiesel and that the fuel supplier will stand behind its products.

To refresh your memory, pure biodiesel is referred to as B100 or 'neat' biodiesel. A biodiesel fuel blend is pure biodiesel blended with petrodiesel. The national biodiesel board refers to biodiesel product blends as Bxx. The xx indicates the amount of biodiesel in the blend. For example, a B20 blend is 20 percent by volume biodiesel and 80 percent by volume petroleum based diesel fuel.

The National Diesel Board doesn't set the quality standards for biodiesel; it simply gives a stamp of approval to biodiesel products that meet government quality control standards. So just who is responsible for setting the quality standards of biodiesel?

In the case of diesel fuel (and biodiesel), the responsibility for setting standards lies within ASTM Committee D02 on Petroleum Products and Lubricants. In order to assure that the standards are realistic and enforceable, ASTM committee D02 is comprised of fuel producers, engine equipment manufacturers, and third party interests (users, government agencies, consultants). ASTM utilizes a ballot process in which a single negative vote against a diesel fuel or biodiesel product is enough to defeat the ballot. This means that the biodiesel product does not make the grade and will not be listed with the National Biodiesel Board.

An ASTM standard approval for any product is not easily achieved. Some standards can take over 10 years to gain agreement and be issued by ASTM. This rigorous, time-consuming process is why ASTM standards are so important to the national biodiesel board which has to guarantee quality biodiesel fuel to you - the consumer.

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