



## PRESS RELEASE: New alternative fueling station opens in Ventura

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For a nation seeking less dependence on foreign oil, Silvas Oil Company has a solution for commuters and truckers passing through Ventura. The Oxnard-based company has officially opened the only commercial fueling station in the county offering alternative fuels.

Located at the old Dixie Truck Stop between the Victoria Avenue and Johnson Road exits, along the frontage road near the highway in Ventura, the new

Silvas fueling station offers E85, which is 85 percent ethanol and 15 percent gasoline, for flex-fuel vehicles, and soy-based B20 Biodiesel.

Additionally, the 65,000-square-foot fueling station provides a new stop for truckers along the 101 freeway. It has the capability of fueling six 18-wheelers at once, while simultaneously fueling high-speed diesel into both tanks, known as satellite dispensing.

“Instead of stopping in Los Angeles and San Francisco to fill up, truckers now have the option to stop in Ventura,” said Michelle Silvas-Kirkelie, general manager of the fuel and management division for Silvas Oil Company. “They can now rethink the process of where to stop.”

But most importantly, said Silvas-Kirkelie, is the availability of alternative fuels in Ventura County.

“Dealerships are selling them (flex-fuel vehicles), but there is nowhere in the county to get it,” said Silvas-Kirkelie. “We wanted to offer this and be the only ones open for the public so everyone can get these fuels.”

More than 400,000 passenger vehicles in California and close to 8 million nationally are capable of operating on E85 ethanol, a number that automakers say will only get larger because they receive federal fuel economy credits for making flex-fuel vehicles, vehicles that provide the option of using regular gasoline or E85.

General Motors Co., Ford Motor Co. and Chrysler Group LLC made a 2006 pledge to double their production of flex-fuel vehicles by the end of this year. In 2006, they produced 700,000 vehicles, and reports say they are likely to meet the pledge, which means making more than 1.4 million flex-fuel vehicles by the end of this year.

However, the lack of E85 fueling stations hasn't allowed flex fuel drivers the opportunity to take advantage of the E85 option, said Silva-Kirkelie. According to the U.S. Department of Energy, there are only 38 commercial alternative fueling stations in California. And prior to the opening of the Silvas fueling station in Ventura County, the nearest alternative fueling station was Los Angeles, then San Diego.

E85 is a corn-based fuel designed to revitalize domestic energy security by decreasing dependency on foreign oil. Additionally, it reduces carbon dioxide and benzene emissions because it doesn't contain the harmful carcinogens found in gasoline. It is also cheaper at the pump. Currently, E85 fuel is 30 to 50 cents cheaper than gasoline.

Detractors suggest it consumes more resources than it saves. By giving automakers tax credits for producing flex fuel vehicles, E85 opponents say, they are enabled to build more large SUVs that burn more gas than ethanol replaces.

Also, if ethanol remains dependent on corn, the demand for corn will rise, resulting in price increases in the food industry, and the demand for increasing land use to grow corn could also rise.

But with the auto industry's increased flex-fuel car production combined with a national urge to reduce dependency on foreign oil and Americans looking to save money at the pump, building an alternative fueling station was a no-brainer for Silvas.

And the Silvas family should know.

The family has been established as the premier oil company in Ventura County since 1977. Charles Silvas, 64, began the company by delivering fuels in Oxnard to farms, construction companies, school districts and military outposts. A few accounts quickly turned into many, and by 1988, he established a commercial fueling gas-card division in Oxnard.

The company began to branch out through different parts of California, with nine private fueling stations, and one commercial retail station now in Ventura.

"We have hopes for the future to turn one or more of the existing places into retail," said Silvas-Kirkelie, 39, who has taken over the reins for her father, along with her brother John Silvas, 41.

But as Silvas-Kirkelie learned, constructing a commercial alternative fueling station is "nearly impossible." The privately funded Ventura station has been in the works since 2007 and, after clearing many hurdles to gain approval from the city, an extensive construction process eventually broke ground, only to find 240 truckloads of contaminated soil from the old tanks of the Dixie Truck Stop.

In its place, Silvas Oil Company installed an underground tank system monitored by the "highest standards in the world," said Matt Thomas, operations manager for Silvas. In accordance with California State Water Resource Control Board's monitoring regulations under Assembly Bill 2481, Thomas said everything in the tank system is double-walled and monitored by a vacuum system that detects leaks and hydrostatic pressure. Any detection of a leak, and the system shuts the station down.

Since it is an unattended station, upper management, which is always connected to the station by computer and surveillance systems, would receive immediate notification.

The new Silvas fueling station is located at 6417 Ventura Blvd. and is open to the public 24/7.

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