



PRESS RELEASE:

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Ethanol, biodiesel fuels now available at Ventura station - By Rachel McGrath

Drivers of vehicles that run on ethanol and biodiesel fuels can now fill up in Ventura.

Silvas Oil Co., which for 30 years has specialized in commercial fleet fueling stations, has opened its first station open to the general public.

The station offers E85 Flex Fuel, a mix of 85 percent corn ethanol and 15 percent gasoline, and B20 Biodiesel, a blend of 80 percent petroleum diesel and 20 percent biodiesel made from soybean oil. It also offers two other types of diesel and three grades of conventional gasoline.

The new station is at the site of the former Dixie truck stop, at 6417 Ventura Blvd. between Johnson Drive and Victoria Avenue.

"The piece of property was already zoned for a fueling station," said Silvas General Manager Michelle Silvas-Kirkelie, who works in the company's Oxnard office. "It had been vacant for some time and offers easy on- and off-access to the (Highway 101) freeway."

Krisie Ricks, an executive assistant with Fresno-based Silvas Oil, said the station, which opened in May, has 19 pumps and 26 handles, and the company wants to get the word out that it's for anyone with a credit card, not just truck and commercial fleet drivers.

"It's unattended. It's self-serve and go," she said

Biodiesel has been sold in California since 2004, but retailers are hard to find. USA Petroleum used to sell biodiesel at one of its Ventura stations but discontinued it. Ventura County residents had to go to Santa Barbara or Los Angeles counties to find it before Silvas opened.

In February 2008, the State Water Resource Control Board, which regulates underground fuel tanks, ruled that biodiesel stored underground poses a potential environmental hazard. A subsequent ruling allowed limited storage underground of B5 and B20 biodiesel blends. The rulings forced Ventura Harbor Marine Fuel on Spinnaker Drive to stop selling the alternative fuel for use in boats and nonroad vehicles.

Silvas-Kirkelie said the Silvas station has new underground storage tanks that allow it to sell B20 Biodiesel.

Biodiesel, a clean-burning fuel that advocates say reduces greenhouse gas emissions and pollution, is more expensive than regular diesel: 15 cents more a gallon this week at the station.

When it comes to saving money, flex fuel is the way to go, Silvas-Kirkelie said. It cost 56 cents less a gallon than regular unleaded this week. It's cheaper partly because of federal subsidies for the ethanol industry.

Flex-fuel vehicles, however, typically get 20 percent to 30 percent fewer miles per gallon when using E85, according to www.fueleconomy.gov.

Such vehicles have an internal combustion engine designed to run on either gasoline or an ethanol blend.

About 8 million flex-fuel vehicles are now on the road in the United States, and the Associated Press reported this week that U.S. automakers expect to meet a goal of making half their vehicle production flex-fuel by 2012. But they warned they could pull back if the number of ethanol pumps at gas stations does not increase.

Currently, only one in five gas stations in the nation offer flex fuels, and the majority are in the Midwest, according to the Associated Press.

Jean Daly, sales manager at Barber Ford in Ventura, welcomed the availability of flex fuel in Ventura and said it might increase consumer interest in Ford's flex-fuel vehicles.

"Flex-fuel capability hasn't been a huge selling feature because the fuel hasn't been available. It's been more of a Midwestern thing," Daly said. "Now that it's available locally, we can promote that feature."

Read more: <http://www.vcstar.com/news/2010/jul/22/ethanol-biodiesel-fuels-now-available/#ixzz1KwAacy1s>
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