

REDUCING EMISSIONS CORPORATE FLEETS



Poland Spring reduces idling to curb emissions

Poland Spring takes its commitment to the communities that supply its water seriously. To reduce its truck fleet emissions, Poland Spring uses non-food-based biofuels, and reduced top speeds by two miles per hour and idling time by 70% from 2007 to 2009.

Even as gasoline and diesel prices have fallen, Poland Spring has intensified its efforts to improve the fuel economy and reduce the carbon dioxide emissions of its fleet.

Community values and rising fuel costs

Poland Spring water has been bottled in Maine since 1845. In part because its roots in the state are so deep, Poland Spring wants to be seen as a good neighbor. As Chris McKenna, who is the fleet manager at Poland Spring, explains: “We’re pulling water from their communities. People want to know that someone from Maine with the Maine logo on our truck is helping to manage our natural resources in a responsible way.” Like its neighbors, Poland Spring believes in doing what it can to protect the environment.

Of course, economics has also driven the greening of the fleet at Poland Spring, which is now owned by Nestle, the world’s largest food and beverage company. “I’ll be honest with you,” McKenna says. “What got us started was \$5 a gallon fuel.” But even as gasoline and diesel prices have fallen, Poland Spring has intensified its efforts to improve the fuel economy and reduce the carbon dioxide emissions of its fleet.

With three bottling facilities in Maine and a filling center in Massachusetts, Poland Spring operates 36 tractor-trailers and 75 tanker trailers, which hold 8,400 gallons each. The tractor-

trailers operate round the clock, delivering water from nine spring sites to the bottling plants.

Making biodiesel from waste

In 2007, as McKenna began to manage the fleet, Poland Spring started to use a biodiesel blend known as B5 for its trucks. The blend mixes conventional diesel fuel with biodiesel made from “non-food-based and non-irrigated soybean and animal fat” such as leftovers from a dogfood plant. (Poland Spring obtained the fuel from Sprague Energy of South Portland, Maine.) In a case study on the new fuel, Poland Spring stated:

“For the 17-month period before Poland Spring began using B5, the composite fuel economy was 5.71 miles per gallon and for the same number of months after beginning B5, their fuel economy increased 0.1 mpg. This may be attributable to the fact that small blend levels of biodiesel (B5 and less) provide improved lubricity benefits versus ultra low diesel fuel (ULSD).”

Along with the slight increase in fuel economy, the company saved about 5 to 12 cents per gallon by using B5 instead of conventional biodiesel, according to McKenna.

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Reducing idling with telematics

Early in 2008, the company turned its focus on idling time. Poland Spring had previously installed onboard computers made by Cadec Global in its trucks but they were used only as electronic log books, so the company could track driver performance. “We originally purchased and used Cadec for electronic logs and to reduce the manpower associated with the paperwork. But there was all this other information,” McKenna said. It turned out that Cadec could be used to track idling time as well, and McKenna was surprised to learn that the trucks were idling for as much as 1,400 hours per month during the winter months.

To see which of the company’s 65 drivers were racking up the most idling time, McKenna put together a ranking. “All we did was talk to them about it, and put a list up in the break room,” he said. “Human nature—no one wants to be at the bottom of the list.” To sweeten the deal, the ten drivers who had the lowest idling time got a gift card for fuel they could use for their own cars.

The results were dramatic. Year over year, idling time dropped from 1,400 hours in February 2007 to 1,000 hours in February 2008 to just 380 hours in February 2009. Cutting idling time has reduced the fleet’s fuel consumption by 8,000 gallons and greenhouse gas emissions by about 77 tons per year. Depending on fuel costs, cutting idling time has saved the company thousands of dollars a year—roughly \$20,000 during 2008, for example.

“We didn’t have to come up with elaborate rules,” McKenna says. “We just made suggestions



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and asked them to use their own best judgment. For instance, it can get pretty cold here in the winter, but at most stops, drivers can go inside to stay warm rather than sit in the truck and idle the engine while they wait to load or unload. Of course, if it is minus 30 degrees, you may have to idle the trucks. That happens.”

McKenna is now pushing the envelope further. Poland Spring lowered its top speed for trucks from 66 to 64 miles per hour. It is mapping out optimum routes and mileage, to make sure that drives are as efficient as possible. It has reduced the amount of process-water that its trucks carry away from one of its bottling plants by installing a spray irrigation system. The company is trying out a synthetic oil which is more expensive but lasts longer in some trucks, to see whether the payback is worth it.

“Along with the fuel crisis came a million and one gimmicks on how to save fuel,” McKenna says. “We’re trying to see what’s real and what’s not.”

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