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Fuel Smarts

Glider-Kit Tractor to Demo Money-Saving Dual-Fuel System, Cab Heater

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Penn Commercial Vehicle Solutions, Freightliner

A demonstrator tractor featuring dual-fuel equipment and a diesel-fueled heater will show the advantages of the glider kits run partly on natural gas and heaters that warm engine coolant and the cab without engine idling.

Assembled by Penn Commercial Vehicle Solutions, of Glenmore, Pa., the vehicle will allow potential customers to try out the concepts in real-world situations before they purchase. The

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Freightliner Coronado tractor has an American Power Group natural gas system and a Webasto coolant heater with SmarTemp Control.

“We initially began this project as a way to familiarize our customers with the new dual-fuel technology from APG,” said Rick Roger, Penn’s CEO. “People can be reticent to buy into a new technology until they’ve tried it for themselves and with this new glider they can do just that.”

Penn obtains the dual-fuel system through its membership in the WheelTime Network, which has a supply contract with APG. WheelTime’s members operate 200 independent service centers throughout the U.S. and back each other’s work through mutual support agreements.

Roger says that once the dual-fuel glider project began, Penn decided to showcase other new equipment as well.

“When we approached Webasto with the idea of featuring their coolant heater technology on our test truck they were quick to jump on board,” said Roger. “They see it as a win-win for everyone.”

The Coronado daycab glider has a rebuilt Detroit Diesel Series 60 engine that has been time-tested and proven to be one of the most popular and reliable engines, he said. The APG dual-fuel system offers emissions reduction advantages as well as considerable savings from inexpensive gas.

The engine will run on diesel or natural gas or both at any time, depending on fuel availability. Gas can be carried in liquefied or compressed form using the appropriate tanks, and gas can come from commercial fueling stations, wellheads, landfills and other sources.

The dual-fuel system displaces up to 80% of the normal diesel fuel consumption, with average displacement ranging from 40% to 65%, APG sources said. The energized fuel balance is maintained with a proprietary read-only electronic controller system, ensuring the engines operate at original equipment manufacturers’ specified temperatures and pressures.

Because cheaper gas displaces diesel fuel, the system offers a 15% to 30% net savings in fuel costs, and is a non-invasive upgrade that boasts a 400- to 800-mile range with no reduction in horsepower, Roger said. The system thus offers a way for fleets to begin using alternative fuels before or instead of committing to more expensive dedicated natural gas vehicles with costs estimated to be upwards of \$50,000.

The Webasto coolant heater is approved by California’s Air Resources Board and verified by the Environmental Protection Agency’s SmartWay program as a fuel saver. It can eliminate cold starts and quickly warm a cab’s interior without idling the engine, and gets the vehicle and its driver on the road quickly. The SmarTemp Control can be programmed to heat automatically at scheduled times, and temperatures can be easily adjusted.

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Cost for a Penn-APG dual-fuel glider with Webasto coolant heater and SmarTemp Control is comparable to that of a new tractor that runs only on relatively expensive diesel fuel, Roger said. More information on the glider and WheelTime is at www.pennpowergroup.com and www.wheeltime.com.