

DEF Reality



By Dan Abrams

DEF is a household word for almost everyone in America that owns and operates a new truck with a 2010 motor or newer. This is because the government, under the Clean Air Act law, requires diesel exhaust emissions meet standards which clean up the nasty pollutants that diesel motors have to mitigate. The engineering, science and money that went into the development of this wonderful system are impressive. The government, the truck manufacturers and motor manufacturers accomplished this goal together. The air is cleaner.

All a truck operator has to do is keep the small DEF tank, usually found next to the trucks saddle tank, replenished with product on a regular basis. The system does the rest!

Not so simple.

Diesel Direct has been following the development of this new technology for several years. At the end of 2011 we launched our program to provide customers with DEF in various quantities such as packaged goods, drums and totes. In addition to the traditional methods of distribution, we developed our own fleet of specialized on site delivery vehicles just to service truck fleets properly.

We have learned a great deal in the past year.

Our greatest surprise – we discovered no proper training is provided to fleet operators and their drivers. New trucks are delivered without the

proper precautions for the handling of DEF, avoiding the contamination of the product and, most importantly, what not to do when filling the DEF tank. I would like to share some of what we have learned the past year.

The most common mistake made is when the driver pours DEF into the trucks saddle tank. Ammonia and water is a deadly combination for a diesel motor. In a matter of a few short miles, tens of thousands of dollars' worth of damage will likely be incurred from this simple mistake.

The driver may lack training, be distracted or just rushing through their route. But the driver is the source of most of the common mistakes we have seen with DEF. A few more thoughts:

- Windshield washer fluid in the DEF Tank. The small blue cap on top of the small DEF tanks can lead an untrained driver to think that's where he adds windshield washer solution. Not a good outcome.
- Diesel in the DEF Tank. Untrained drivers sometimes think that the "other tank" is a backup reserve diesel fuel tank and they try to squeeze diesel fuel in even though diesel fuel nozzles don't fit the small opening in the DEF tank. Somehow the driver gets some fuel in and the results are disastrous.
- DEF in the driver's eyes. We have seen workman's comp complaints from drivers trying to pump DEF into the tank and the splash back squirts corrosive ammonia into