

Network for recycling waste from forecourt miss-fuelling is based on LWE's SuperVault, above ground storage tanks

By Mike Taylor, Ledbury Welding Ltd

Mis-fuelling - motorists mistakenly putting petrol into a diesel vehicle or vice versa, continues to be a regular occurrence at filling stations. The costs accrued by the mis-fuelling of police cars have made headline news. In other instances, ambulances have been put out of action by their forgetful crews. Commentators say that the problem has grown with the popularity of diesel powered cars and 4x4 crossover SUVs. Male owners of petrol/diesel, two car households are the usual culprits.

Before the introduction of suitable road-side rescue services, private motorists had to wait while their cars were recovered by a breakdown truck and defueled by a suitable service workshop. The experience was both costly and time consuming. Today, fortunately, the leading road-side rescue services, as well as some independent operators, are deploying specialised service vehicles that are equipped to safely decant the waste fuel. Also, if necessary they will also provide a replacement top up, enabling the motorist to get home or back to a filling station.

These services have been made possible by the creation of a national network of waste fuel disposal points, providing 24/7 accessibility. The facilities have been set up by Refuels Limited in conjunction with Ledbury Welding & Engineering (LWE) - a British tank manufacturer specialising in the safe storage of petrol and other low flash products.

"In operation, the network collects the waste fuel which is then brought to a central depot for reprocessing and restoration as useable fuel products," explains Refuels Limited, owner and group chairman, Mike Taylor.

Mike Taylor's involvement with the fuel oil sector began with the production of biodiesel from waste cooking oil. Renewable energy sources were seen as an important development at the time and processing costs were being subsidised by a government grant. Mike was one of the industry pioneers, having set up one of the country's first bulk processing plants, supplying key accounts, including local government authorities in the Channel Islands.

From his business connections, Mike learnt about the market for recycling mixed fuels and in particular, other sources of waste material such as contaminated fuel from garage forecourts. In the early days this was collected at approved waste transfer stations. This material was being collected and sent to specialist facilities for reprocessing and resale into various market sectors.

Mike Taylor continues. "By 2006, the quantity of potentially reusable fuel entering the recycling channel was already considerable. I could see also that the existing procedures were

disjointed and not really fit for handling further growth. The existing disposal procedures, the licensed transfer stations, were restricted to 9 to 5 business hours. De-fuelling rescue services were being offered on an ad-hoc basis. Clearly, there were vulnerabilities and I could see that there was a good business opportunity in setting up the facilities required to provide safe and appropriate support that would be capable of handling large volumes of this material.

"I looked at the complete recycling process. Then I put together a plan and a small team to provide a regular collection service for all the waste storage drums. We then delivered these to a recycling plant for cleaning and processing as resalable fuel products."

"As this business developed, we purchased a small independent operator and started our own rescue service, collecting waste fuel from garage forecourts. Since we were dealing with duty paid



Mike Taylor, Owner and Group Chairman, Refuels Limited

wet-stock, these activities impinged on HMRC approval procedures. This was new territory for the government authorities and we had to convince them that this material was reusable fuel and not low grade waste oil.

"At the same time the leading national roadside rescue services were becoming aware of our facilities because their members were opting to use the independent operators in preference to the less convenient, workshop recovery procedure."

"Following an approach by a mainstream rescue service provider, we reached an agreement to shut down our mobile service and hand over the existing business. We could see that an open all-hours disposal facility would be an essential requirement for continuing development of these services. The next logical step therefore, was to focus on the means for providing a regional network of disposal/collection facilities.

"Another important requirement was to establish a safe process which would meet, if not surpass, the existing disposal arrangements offered through waste transfer stations. This necessitated the provision of high specification storage tanks designed to meet the standards required for low flash petroleum products.

Mike Taylor continues. "Having obtained approval from the Environment Agency, we put together an operational requirement and went out to open tender to find a suitable tank supplier. Subsequently Ledbury Welding & Engineering (LWE) with its SuperVault technology secured the contract to provide the first five collection tanks. Three of these were located in London, one in Birmingham and one in Manchester."

A deciding factor was Ledbury Welding's capability to provide a complete package that could be easily transported or relocated. The tank is totally self-contained with security monitoring instrumentation powered by solar panel. The design includes dry coupling connections for automated loading.

Refuel's UK network has since been expanded with an additional 20 installations, now covering all the major conurbations around the UK. In Europe networks are being set up in France and Belgium. The contents from these tanks are emptied monthly and delivered to the processing facility by the company's specialist fuel tanker service.



Refuels Limited has set up a network of waste fuel disposal tanks across the UK

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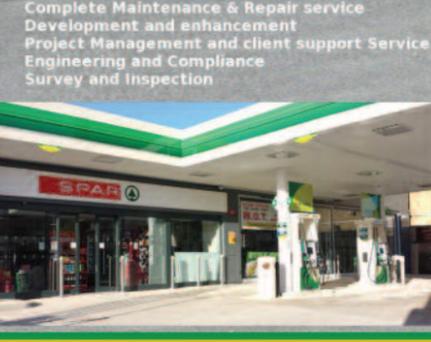
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