



# Frequently Asked Questions about **Biodiesel in underground storage tanks**

from Ecology's Toxics Cleanup Program

## **What is biodiesel?**

Biodiesel is a cleaner-burning diesel replacement fuel made from vegetable oil. Using biodiesel in a conventional diesel engine substantially reduces emissions of unburned hydrocarbons, carbon monoxide, sulfates and particulate matter. Biodiesel is also much less toxic to the environment than petroleum-based diesel and biodegrades much faster.

Different blends of biodiesel and petroleum diesel are on the market. Higher blends of biodiesel, including 100 percent biodiesel, are most popular for marine vessels and other applications in pristine or vulnerable environments. Blends such as 20 percent biodiesel are popular for general use due to current lower cost.

## **How do Washington's Underground Storage Tank regulations apply to biodiesel?**

If biodiesel is blended with petroleum diesel, another petroleum product, or a hazardous substance, Washington's Underground Storage Tank (UST) regulations apply to those blends (Chapter 173-360 WAC). One-hundred percent biodiesel contains no petroleum-based products or hazardous substances. Therefore, Washington's UST regulations do not apply to 100 percent biodiesel.

## **What if I change the use of a tank from diesel to 100 percent biodiesel?**

People who change the use of an underground storage tank from storing diesel to storing 100 percent biodiesel must send Ecology a letter explaining the change. In addition, a site assessment must be performed by a certified site assessor (Chapter 173-360-385 WAC). Ecology will then inform the Department of Licensing to discontinue billing for tank fees. Ecology highly recommends that tank insurance be maintained after the change-in-service, unless the owner never expects to use a regulated substance in the tank again.

## Who should I contact regarding a spill of biodiesel?

Although biodiesel is far less toxic to the environment than petroleum diesel, it can still be a problem if spilled near or on water bodies. Please contact the appropriate Ecology regional office if you encounter a spill:

Ecology's Northwest Regional Office, Bellevue -- 425-649-7000

Ecology's Southwest Regional Office, Olympia -- 360-407-6300

Ecology's Central Regional Office, Yakima -- 509-575-2490

Ecology's Eastern Regional Office, Spokane -- 509-329-3400

