

Westerly biofuel firm gives 'green' country star a fill-up

By Brian Hallenbeck, Published on 5/9/2009

Mohegan - If he wasn't a favorite of the girls in the Guardian Fuel office before his Mohegan Sun appearances this week, he's a chart-topper now.

In fact, Keith Urban's been a hit with the Westerly company since Stage Call, the Apache Junction, Ariz., trucking company that transports the country star, his crew and his equipment, phoned a few weeks ago, looking for biodiesel fuel.

That's right. The crooner's "green."

"The girls in the office were just ecstatic when we got the call," Jamie Lohr, president of Guardian Fuel & Energy Systems, said Friday as a Guardian tanker topped off Urban's fleet of 18-wheelers in a lot for oversized vehicles at Mohegan Sun.

"We gave tickets to all the girls in the office," said Lohr, who co-owns the business with her husband Randy. "One of them couldn't make it, so I went (Thursday night)."

Stage Call found Guardian through the National Biodiesel Board's Web site, where Guardian's listed as the only major retail supplier of biodiesel between New Haven and Providence. It's been pumping the stuff since 2006, and just last month - in time for Earth Day - began supplying Haley Brook Market on Route 184 in Old Mystic with a 5-percent blend dispensed from a conventional gas-station pump.

"Any diesel vehicle can burn it," Randy Lohr said, extolling the benefits of biodiesel fuel, which is made from such renewable energy sources as animal fats and soybeans. Vehicles that burn it have far lower emissions and get better mileage than those that run on regular diesel, Lohr said, and then there's that bit about reducing our dependence on foreign oil, too.

Blending biodiesel with regular diesel - its done in 5-percent increments - increases the cost by only pennies a gallon.

Guardian has also introduced BioHeat, a 5-percent home biofuel that any oil-heating system can burn. About 15 percent of the company's customers are using it, Lohr said.

Stage Call, the trucking company, specified that it wanted a 20 percent blend of biodiesel for Urban's fleet, the same blend Guardian's own vehicles burn.

The 13 trucks in Urban's fleet can each hold about 300 gallons of fuel, and generally travel about 1,000 miles between fuelings, which is about every third stop, Dan Fisher, of Obion, Tenn., Urban's lead truck driver, said. Guardian expected to pump about 2,000 gallons Friday.

"People are talking about biodiesel, and he (Urban) likes it," Fisher said. "But we've got to have it brought to us."

Urban's tour, which began with the Mohegan Sun shows Thursday and Friday nights, is moving on to State College, Pa. — burning biodiesel all the way.



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Tour truck driver Robert Mangum, right, watches Friday as Guardian Fuel and Energy Systems employee Dan Wheeler pumps biodiesel in the parking lot at Mohegan Sun into one of the trucks hauling the tour gear for country star Keith Urban.