

Sebring launches pilot propane program

By JOE SEELIG

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The city of Sebring is looking at a fuel-saving alternative and Tuesday had a propane injection system installed into one of its diesel yard-waste trucks, said Rob Miller, the city's public works director.

The city council gave Miller its blessing at Tuesday's council meeting.

Miller said Wednesday that he's been approached several times by Gary Ivers, of Gary Ivers and Associates, to try out his propane injection system.

"He's kind of like Hank Hill when it comes to propane and propane products... that you just can't say no to," said Miller referring to the regular-guy cartoon character in "King of the Hill," who is always touting the use of propane.

"He's got a Dodge Ram diesel truck he's running on a propane diesel mix. It's probably a pretty good sales tactic if he's willing to run it on his truck."

While the system costs \$1,500, Miller decided to let Ivers install the system on two vehicles, the yard-waste truck and in a week or two, on an older trash truck.

"After pitching the product he decided to install them on a trial basis," said Miller.

The system consists of the propane tank, a hose and a pressure regulator that leads to the truck's fuel injectors.

Burning the fuel at a 70 percent diesel and 30 percent propane ratio, Ivers predicted it would save on the cost of diesel and cut down on vehicle emissions, which is better for the environment.

"I'm thinking about taking an old, tired piece of equipment and putting it on one of those," said Miller. "I think I'll be more able to see the difference in fuel consumption and the newer trucks are cleaner burning."

Miller estimated the system could ultimately be installed on as many as 16 to 18 vehicles.

"If it works out we will look at extending it throughout the rest of the fleet," he said.

The cost of each system could be reclaimed in savings over about four years, he said.

City Council President John Griffin told the council that if the system works out and is saving the city money, Coker Fuel could install a propane refueling station at the city pumps.

Other users have reportedly indicated a savings of up to 25 percent, Miller said.

There is also a federal incentive that goes along with the installation; a 50 cent per gallon savings on excise taxes that is redeemable at the end of the year.

"Not only are we doing something for the environment, but from a business sense we're doing something good," he said.

The rub is how long the federal government keeps the tax savings program up.