

OPEI Issues Consumer Alert on New Ethanol (E15) Fuel Coming to a Gas Station Near You

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Homeowners, lawn and landscape businesses, the forestry industry, municipalities, park services, schools and other users should avoid using E15 fuels in outdoor power equipment due to potential safety risks and performance problems-

Alexandria, VA – October 13, 2010 – The Outdoor Power Equipment Institute (OPEI) today advised outdoor power equipment users to be aware of new fuel coming on the market with higher levels of ethanol that could harm equipment sitting in their garages, tool sheds and maintenance buildings. Over two hundred million pieces of outdoor power equipment could be at risk of product failure or voided warranty, including chainsaws, lawnmowers, utility vehicles, generators, snow throwers, trimmers, edgers, pruners, chippers, shredders and blowers.

This advisory comes after the decision by the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) to approve higher levels of ethanol (E15 or 15% ethanol) in gasoline for use in *only* 2007 and newer automobiles.

Consumers need to be aware that until today, the maximum allowable limit of ethanol in gasoline was E10 or 10%. That means, all engine products in use today, with the exception of “flex-fuel” automobiles, were designed, built and warranted to run on gasoline containing *no more* than 10% ethanol. Use of E15 or higher ethanol blended fuels in any engine product, with the exception of a “flex-fuel” automobile, could cause performance issues, damage engines, and void the manufacturer’s warranty.

Consumer Advisory: OPEI advises consumers of the following measures to protect their products and prevent voiding warranties:

1. Consumers should read and follow the owner’s manual. The owner’s manual will clearly explain what fuels can be used to ensure a properly functioning product.
2. Do not put any fuel containing more than 10 percent (E10) in small engine products (EPA’s decision only applies to 2007 and newer highway vehicles), unless otherwise stated.
3. Consumers must check the pump to be sure that it is dispensing E10. Some gas pumps at local gas stations may offer both E10 and E15, or have blender pumps that dispense mid-level ethanol fuels for “flex-fuel” automobiles. Higher ethanol fuel (E15) may be less expensive than regular (E10) fuel, but putting E15 into an E10 approved product could cause product failure and void its warranty.
4. Many consumers fill their vehicle gas tank and the gasoline can at the same time. Be sure that the gas can is filled only with E10 fuel.

“The Department of Energy’s (DOE) own testing has shown that putting anything other than E10 in non-road, small engines can cause performance irregularities and equipment failure,” said Kris Kiser Executive Vice President at the Outdoor Power Equipment Institute. “Consumers need to understand this or they could encounter performance irregularities, increased heat and exhaust temperatures, failure or unintentional clutch engagement when using outdoor lawn and garden equipment.”

Added Kiser, “Consumers should understand that current outdoor power equipment may be permanently damaged and could pose a safety risk if E15 fuel is used. Almost without exception, current equipment is not designed, built or warranted for mid-level blends.” OPEI supports Congressional efforts towards energy independence and the use of biofuels, including ethanol, and manufacturers can design and build future equipment to run on specific blends. However, current equipment was not designed to run on any fuel exceeding 10% ethanol.

Background: Growth Energy, an ethanol industry trade group, petitioned the EPA in March 2009 to raise the limit on ethanol in gasoline from 10 to 15 percent. OPEI urged EPA to be deliberative in its review process, assuring thorough and adequate testing to assure that E15 would not harm existing products or pose safety risks. By approving E15 use in a small subset of engines on the road, there is a high risk that consumers will unknowingly or mistakenly put E15 in products for which it has not been approved.

About OPEI: OPEI is an international trade association representing the \$15 billion landscape, forestry, utility and lawn equipment manufacturing industry. OPEI is committed to ongoing efforts to ensure consumer safety and access to outdoor power equipment in order to maintain and enhance outdoor landscapes. OPEI works with federal, state and local groups to ensure that equipment operates efficiently, safely and is fully emission compliant. OPEI is a recognized Standards Development Organization for the American National Standards Institute (ANSI) and active internationally through the International Standards Organization (ISO) in the development of safety standards. For more information on OPEI visit www.OPEI.org.