

Press Release

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Yorkshire, England

New Gas Chromatograph Helps Combat Fuel Fraud



David Ford, Justice Minister for Northern Ireland, checks out the mobile GC system

A new compact gas chromatograph (GC) system has been fitted to 54 testing vehicles across the UK and Ireland, allowing roadside checks of fuel. It is proving to be a key tool in the fight against fuel fraud. The new mobile analyser system, from IMA Ltd, uses the Falcon Analytical GC in a ground-breaking project that has resulted in the world's most sophisticated roadside analysis system.

Rebated, or "red", diesel is a long-established fuel used by farmers and seafarers in their work, allowing them to pay a lower rate of duty on their fuel. Criminal gangs have laundered the "red" diesel and sold it into the main-stream fuel forecourt network making substantial profits. Over the years, a number of chemical markers have been added to try to combat this practise, but the illegal removal of these markers has allowed extensive fuel fraud and hit the tax-payer hard. The resulting fuels can also significantly damage engines. Strong acids and alkalis are used in fuel laundering leading to large amounts of toxic waste. Fuel fraud is therefore bad for the tax payer and our engines, and the environment.

A new fuel marker, Accutrace™ S10 from the Dow Chemical Company was introduced by HMRC and the Irish Revenue and Customs in 2015, and is proving to be a vital tool in the continuing fight against fuel fraud.

Fuel duty on legitimate diesel increased by **£310 Million* (6%) in the first 3 months** of use, as illegal fuel launderers ceased or decreased their operations.

Paul Stockwell, Managing Director at IMA Ltd said "This project represents a major step forward in GC technology. Getting GCs out of the laboratory and closer to where the analysis is needed can have profound effects on how useful the data can be".

The mobile GC systems have helped the enforcement agencies turn the tables on the fuel fraudsters by detecting the presence of the marker at extremely low levels in just 7 minutes. As the analyser provides a breakdown of fuel components, it can also show if attempts have been made to mask or remove the marker, further discouraging criminal attempts at removal. Before the new analyser system was developed fuel samples would have to be analysed in a laboratory to obtain the detail necessary to show that fuel had been tampered with. Now that this can be done at the roadside, illegal fuel can be seized, and the supply route quickly investigated. In just 3 months since its introduction, HMRC found 85 instances at the road-side and in filling stations where fuel had been laundered and was free of all other markers except Accutrace™ S10.

NOTES:

*HMRC report "Combatting Fuel Duty Fraud. Evaluation of the Accutrace™ S10 Marker".

Fuel sales in UK showing increase in legitimate diesel and decrease in gas oil used in fuel fraud

Period	Diesel (litres)	Difference	Increase
Q1 2013	8,822,876,153		
Q1 2014	9,005,376,203	182,500,050	2.1%
Q1 2015	9,538,745,835	533,369,632	5.9%

Period	Gas Oil (Litres)	Difference	Increase
Q1 2013	1,813,775,440		
Q1 2014	1,846,825,180	33,049,740	1.8%
Q1 2015	1,817,933,054	-28,892,126	-1.6%

While the increase may have come about due to a range of factors it is reasonable to suggest that some of the increase is due to the influence and success of the new marker and the ability to carry out field tests. If the 2013 to 2014 increase is deemed "normal" the 2014 to 2015 increase is nearly 200% more than the "norm".

"ACCUTRACE" is a trademark of The Dow Chemical Company ("Dow") or an affiliated company of Dow.

For all media enquiries please contact:
Rebecca Taylor
Marketing Manager
e: becky.taylor@ima.co.uk
t: +44 (0)1256 883 304

t: +44 (0)1943 878 877 | e: info@ima.co.uk | w: www.ima.co.uk