

Propane Autogas Fleet Case Study

Lewis Pest Control in Alabama

Overview

For Scott Lewis, president and general manager of Lewis Pest Control, Inc., converting his vehicles to propane autogas all came down to dollars and cents. A small, family-owned business that provides pest management services to Alabama, southeastern Mississippi and the panhandle of Florida, Lewis Pest Control has trucks that average 30,000 miles per year, and cutting fuel and maintenance costs is a top priority.

Program Participation

Scott was familiar with propane autogas technology after converting vehicles to run on the fuel in the 1980s, before gasoline prices dropped drastically. In 2008, he was reintroduced to the fuel at an alternative fuel conference, and learned that the technology had advanced tremendously in the past three decades, compared to the “old-fashioned systems” he had worked with previously.

“After hearing about propane autogas again, I took a look at a number of alternative fuels, and I couldn’t find any others that were as good of a fit for my fleet vehicles, or the infrastructure ended up being cost prohibitive,” says Scott. “Autogas was the most viable option for reducing my fuel costs and receiving a quick return on investment.” Scott began his autogas fleet that year by converting three of his Chevrolet 1500s from gasoline to propane autogas. The fuel savings were significant right out of the gate: autogas was averaging \$1.40 per gallon less than gasoline, including a 50-cent-per-gallon alternative fuel tax credit.

Then, in 2009, Scott learned there would be an opportunity to receive funding assistance for five additional autogas vehicle conversions through the Southeast Propane Autogas Development Program (SPADP). Scott says, “It was an easy decision, deciding to convert more vehicles to autogas. The drivers liked the vehicles, I was already seeing tremendous fuel savings, and we had access to numerous propane autogas fueling stations.” The conversions for the five vehicles were all completed by December 2011.

Working With Vendor Partners

Alliance AutoGas is a national network of conversion centers and fuel suppliers that provides a complete alternative fuel solution to fleets. Alliance worked with Scott to convert his first three vehicles to autogas, and they also provide the installations, fueling, and customer support for the entire regional grant program. “The thing that has made my company’s adoption of alternative fuels so easy is our work with Alliance AutoGas,” notes Scott. “Our Alliance representative is extremely knowledgeable and is always available when I have a question.”

Fleet Facts

Fleet Organization:
Lewis Pest Control, AL

President and General Manager:
Scott Lewis

Industry Type:
Pest Management

Began Conversions:
November 2008

Autogas Vehicles in Fleet:
3 Ford F-150 Trucks
2 Chevrolet 2500 Trucks
3 Chevrolet 1500 Trucks

Estimated Annual Autogas Usage:
16,000 Gallons

Est. Annual Fuel Cost Savings:
\$16,000

Autogas Fueling Infrastructure:
Two 1,000-gallon Tanks



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Scott's local Chevrolet dealer, Brooks Chevrolet, is the certified conversion center that completed Lewis Pest Control's vehicle conversions. Brooks Chevrolet became an Alliance AutoGas conversion center after Scott approached them and discussed his autogas fleet program plans with them. "They were on board immediately," says Scott. "They agreed that autogas was a viable alternative fuel, they liked the Prins bi-fuel conversion system, and were excited to join the Alliance network."

Scott says it was also important for him to factor in vehicle downtime when evaluating different alternative fuel options. Each of the converted autogas vehicles was only out of commission for around 2 days during the conversion process, resulting in no upset of operations – an extremely important consideration for a company running 60 vehicles across three states.

Results

Lewis Pest Control expects to save more than \$16,000 in fuel costs annually with its eight propane autogas vehicles. Additionally, Scott's eight autogas vehicles displace approximately 20 tons of greenhouse gas emissions each year, and since the U.S. supply of autogas is more than 98 percent domestically produced, Lewis Pest Control is utilizing an American-made fuel supply.

"My drivers like the propane autogas vehicles and have said that they're no different or less convenient than their gasoline vehicles," says Scott. "Driver adoption is a huge part of a program like this, so having easy access to fueling and similar vehicle performance is critical."

Lewis Pest Control's long-term plan is to fund autogas conversions for two additional vehicles every year. Scott says that he currently pays around \$1 per gallon less for autogas than for gasoline, so achieving a quick ROI is very feasible.

"I have been very pleased with the propane autogas vehicles," says Scott, whose own personal vehicle runs on autogas. "I always tell people that it's great knowing we're using a domestic fuel that reduces emissions, but ultimately, the dollars and cents have to work for a small business like mine. And they do."

About This Program

The Southeast Propane Autogas Development Program is comprised of public and private partnerships throughout 10 southeastern states, Denver and Pittsburgh. Over its four-year span, the Program will work with over 35 public and private fleets to put more than 1,200 clean autogas vehicles on the road and implement more than 35 autogas fueling stations. Supported by funding from the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act and the U.S. Department of Energy's Clean Cities Program, it is managed and administered by the Virginia Department of Mines, Minerals and Energy and Virginia Clean Cities at James Madison University. To learn more, visit www.usepropaneautogas.com or email info@usepropaneautogas.com.

Alabama fleets interested in learning more about propane autogas should contact Mark Bentley, executive director of the Alabama Clean Fuels Coalition, at 205-402-2755 or mark@alabamacleanfuels.com.

