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DIESEL

Smelly, old diesel engines are fine, but bio-diesel fueled, 50-miles-to-the-gallon, engines are off limits. Go figure.

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The State of Maine has banned the sale of new fuel efficient biodiesel cars. The reason is that they do not meet the California emissions standards Maine adopted. Efforts to remove the ban which seem senseless have fallen on deaf ears by the Maine Board of Environmental Protection. You can buy one out of state and register it in Maine and that's within the law. Or you can buy a used one with more than 7,500 miles on it here, and that's OK. But you can't buy a new one from a Maine dealer. Common sense has been lost because of unyielding federal vs. state law.

The State is trying to convince the federal EPA that it is doing all it can to meet federal clean air requirements. There is no room to negotiate, even if overall greenhouse emission standards would be dramatically improved. In two years a new ultra-low-sulfur diesel fuel will replace

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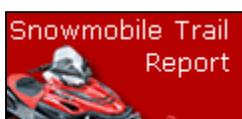
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WCSH NEWS CENTER 6 at
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6:30 pm
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regular diesel, and the issue will go away.

But until then Maine auto dealers and their customers will be between a rock and a hard place. Smelly, old diesel engines are fine, but bio-diesel fueled, 50 miles to the gallon, engines are off limits. Go figure.

Fred Nutter
Editorial Director
2/13/04



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