

Recat working on Tier 0 VDECS solution

By Bill Davis, Editor

In geology, the combination of heat and pressure can create gems – and so it is with air quality regulations and the search for solutions for contractors more affordable than engine or equipment replacement.

SCCA affiliate member Recat, Inc., has a potential gem for contractors worried about how to keep their older equipment in action. The unique approach involves the marriage of two product lines – in this case the Emissions Technology platinum injection system with a particulate filter from German manufacturer Huss to potentially reduce particulate matter emissions to nearly nothing – way beyond the 85 percent goal announced by the California Air Resources Board (CARB).

Both products have received CARB Executive Orders saying they do not increase oxide of nitrogen (NOx) emissions and can be sold for appropriate off-road diesel engine applications throughout the state.

85 percent PM reduction

John Dunlap, former chairman of the California Air Resource Board, and a consultant for Recat, announced on November 14 that the ARB has verified the HUSS FS-MK diesel particulate filter as a level 3 diesel emissions control system. This verification is for many on-road and most off-road engines through 2006. The FS-MK series will achieve an 85% reduction in emissions. One of the most important elements of the Recat offering is that the systems – either separately or in combination – can be used on machines equipped with Tier 0 engines, built prior to 1996. This engine classification makes up nearly two-thirds of the California construction fleet and is the primary target of all CARB regulations regarding construction equipment.

They could also provide solutions for contractors worried about how to

keep Tier 0 engines powering portable equipment operational after the January 1, 2010 CARB deadline for this equipment class.

The wrinkle in this story is that CARB, which has been promising an ample supply of Verified Diesel Emission Control Systems (VDECS) for off-road equipment, apparently isn't willing to let this technology be used on portable engines. This obstructionism surfaced during a meeting in Sacramento, November 20th, on re-opening the state-wide Portable Equipment Registration Program (PERP).

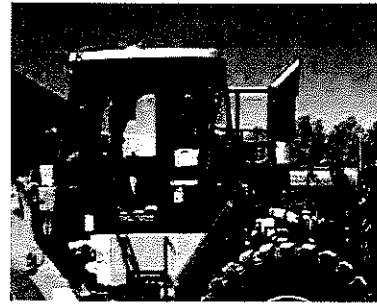
No VDECS for portables?

When questioned about allowing equipment owners to use VDECS on portable equipment, Mike Tollstrup, chief of the Project Assessment Branch, rejected it out of hand.

When asked why, Tollstrup said the products do nothing to reduce NOx; a telling comment about the direction the agency is headed in both the portable and off-road rules, which are crafted as Air Toxic Control Measures to cover diesel particulate matter (PM). NOx is not defined as an air toxic (cancer-causing substance) and is not currently covered by the portable ATCM or in the last iteration of the proposed off-road rules.

This statement by a high-level official like Tollstrup is virtual confirmation of industry suspicions regarding CARB's ultimate goal for all construction equipment – total replacement of the 200,000+ California engines with the yet-to-be-invented Tier 4 systems – equipment which won't be available until sometime in the middle of the next decade. Tier 4 systems (and they are reported to be much more than just a new engine) are EPA-mandated to produce huge reductions in both PM and NOx.

This not-so-hidden objective is currently impossible to achieve. When



Tier 4 systems become available, they will be incredibly expensive; this brings the industry back to possible solutions like the innovative Recat approach. This is a classic case of American inventiveness—creating solutions to problems as they come up, giving construction equipment owners at least a fighting chance to stay in business long enough to produce the profit required to purchase machines that will do the job while meeting environmental goals.

CARB is, apparently, willing to help in this regard. The approval of the Huss particulate filters was a product of the agency demonstrating willingness to accept European air quality standards for these add-on devices, a move that industry repeatedly asked for at numerous meetings. The Europeans and the Japanese air regs are even more stringent than those Californians are facing. More products from these markets should be making their way into the California market as distributors such as Recat search for solutions to their customers' needs.

But, as CARB Executive Officer Catherine Witherspoon is fond of saying: "If you want to know what we are going to do, look at what we have done." Coupled this with the agency's reluctance to accept VDECS technology on portable equipment and it provides an unsettling prospect for the use of lower cost alternatives for the off-road fleet.

For more information, call Tom Yeager or Michael Avery at 800-243-0373, by email: recatinc@aol.com or visit their web site www.recat.com. ♦