

UL meeting summary (Nov 1-2, 2006; UL Headquarters Northbrook, IL)

Purpose of meeting: Technical forum co-hosted by UL and DOE to discuss Safety Testing and Certification/Listing of E85 Dispensers

1. Approximately 40 attendees from industry, petroleum equipment manufacturers, automakers, Tier 1 suppliers of fuel system components, materials experts, and DOE national laboratories
2. Discussed accelerated test methods to verify materials compatibility, acceptable or unacceptable materials (i.e.; metals, plastics, elastomers, sealants, gaskets) application-specific requirements, safety labeling, guidance for fire protection personnel and safety officials, typical scenarios for misuse/abuse by consumers, etc.
3. UL indicated that if attendees or other industry stakeholders could provide documented evidence of past testing or safety evaluations to show that specific materials or pieces of equipment were indeed E85 compatible, then those items might be eligible for a test-exempt status (which would greatly accelerate the current approval process).
4. Although the initial discussion was focused on dispensers, it was agreed that some of the same critical issues needed to be addressed for underground storage tanks (UST) and piping that would be used for alcohol fuels (for both new installations as well as conversions from gasoline). UL tech teams for UST and piping were also present.
5. Good progress was made regarding acceptable test fluids and certain non-metallic materials. However, not much hard data was provided by the attendees. Most of the petroleum dispenser manufacturers indicated that the procedures they followed to convert gasoline dispensers to E85 were largely based on field experience.
6. Vehicle OEMs present (GM and Ford) did share extensive vehicle based testing data and procedures that helped the UL team outline certain aspects of a tentative testing protocol (not all of their experience is directly relatable to dispensers and fueling equipment).
7. UL stressed that safety data must be documented in detail to be valid and acceptable to public safety officials and codes & standards bodies. To help elicit additional information UL agreed to develop a questionnaire & format for hard data submission (distributed to attendees Nov 3). Attendees pledged to gathering additional pertinent data and submit it to UL by November 15. UL will contact key trade associations and some manufacturing partners privately (may even make sites visits) to solicit proprietary/competitive data that could be used to develop generic standards.
8. UL tech team will contact Brazilian ethanol industry and other UL worldwide offices to solicit info on related testing or safety compliance programs already in place.
9. UL and DOE Stressed the joint responsibility held by all attendees for making solid science-based recommendations for public safety in an "accelerated as possible" timeframe.
10. Based on the November 15 feedback, UL will issue a high level report soon summarizing what they have been able to gather from industry to date, gaps where information is still lacking, and recommended next steps.