



NATURAL GAS VEHICLES

A CASE STUDY FROM SOUTHERN CALIFORNIA GAS COMPANY

MANY BUSINESSES AND
 GOVERNMENTAL AGENCIES
 ARE DISCOVERING THE
 ADVANTAGES OF ADDING
 NATURAL GAS VEHICLES
 (NGVS) TO THEIR FLEETS.
 SUCH VEHICLES HAVE A
 POSITIVE IMPACT ON AIR
 QUALITY, PUBLIC HEALTH AND
 TRANSPORTATION ECONOMICS
 SINCE NATURAL GAS BURNS
 MORE CLEANLY THAN OTHER
 FOSSIL FUELS AND TYPICALLY
 COSTS LESS AT THE PUMP
 THAN GASOLINE AND DIESEL.



Fourth Generation Company Swept Away by CNG Technology

R.F. Dickson Co, Inc. has provided municipal street sweeping services to the residents of California for more than 58 years. Serving 30 cities, counties, and agencies within the Los Angeles basin. The family-run company currently utilizes 16 twin-engine Compressed Natural Gas (CNG) sweepers. As they continue to expand their operations, seven additional CNG sweepers will be added this year.

CNG: Stable, Domestic Technology

RF Dickson began their transition to CNG technology in 1999, attracted by the domestically produced, clean burning fuel. The company received their first CNG sweeper in June of 2002, and opened their fueling station later that October. "There were two major reasons we decided on CNG technology," said Steve Dickson, President of R.F. Dickson. "We wanted to be independent from the shortage in supply and price fluctuations caused by foreign oil, and we needed to proactively prepare for the South Coast Air Quality Management District's (SCAQMD) Fleet Rule mandates taking effect in 2002. CNG technology provided a solution to both."

10 years later, R.F. Dickson has undergone extensive growth in their CNG operations. Owning and operating one of the largest private fueling facilities in Southern California, their high-powered compressor provides fueling for eight city fleets, five school districts, CALTRAN, airport shuttles, personal autos, taxis, private fleets and their own street sweepers.

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Outside Support Alleviates Start-Up Costs

According to Dickson, many fleet managers are intimidated by the start-up costs associated with converting to CNG. He stresses that funding options can alleviate much of the financial burden and suggests looking into available grants before making the transition.

“Outside grants can cover up to 50 percent of the fueling station cost, and they will also cover a large portion of CNG vehicle conversions,” Dickson said. “Each grant is available through a competitive review process, and for special vehicles, such as school buses, a larger portion of the cost may be covered.” CNG is the most cost-effective alternative fuel source available according to Dickson, who cites its mature infrastructure and stability as additional benefits. “As it stands today, CNG is more cost-efficient than propane or hydrogen,” Dickson said. “It also has a mature infrastructure, as the technology is at least five years ahead of the others.” Urging new CNG users to take advantage of outside resources, Dickson praises Southern California Gas Company (SoCalGas®) for the extensive support, advice and assistance they have provided since RF Dickson’s CNG transition. “Our SoCalGas representative has partnered with our company from the start,” Dickson said. “She has been a great asset to have on board, having an extensive knowledge of available grants for fueling station funding and vehicle conversions. She is truly an indispensable resource.”

Sharing the Benefit of Experience

In addition to their long-held street sweeping operation, R.F. Dickson has helped to alleviate the initial roadblocks other fleets encountered when switching to CNG technology.” They contributed to many successful CNG conversions, including a recent project with the Bellflower Unified School District. Through the procurement of various grants, the school district was able to replace 31 school buses with CNG technology.

SOUTHERN CALIFORNIA GAS COMPANY

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