Press information

Volvo Trucks first to market gas-powered truck for long-haul operations

Volvo Trucks is enhancing its focus on alternative fuels with the launch of the new Volvo FM MethaneDiesel. This truck is powered by up to 75 percent gas. Thanks to its fuel-efficient technology – which extends the vehicle's operating range – it can considerably reduce CO_2 emissions from heavy and long-distance transport operations.

"The sales start of our methane-diesel model creates new conditions for the gas truck market. By using liquefied gas in an efficient diesel engine, we make it possible to use gas-powered trucks in heavier and longer-distance transport operations, making us the first manufacturer in Europe to do so," says Claes Nilsson, President Europe Division at Volvo Trucks.

The fact that the company is developing gas technology and making it more attractive for the transport sector creates future potential for significantly reducing the collective environmental impact of heavy transports. This technology with natural gas generates 10 % lower CO_2 emissions than a diesel engine does. In the long term, Volvo Trucks regards the increased use of natural gas as a major step towards greater availability and use of biogas, which reduces CO_2 emissions still further.

"We are convinced that liquefied gas is one of the most important future alternatives to today's vehicle fuels," says Lars Mårtensson, Director Environmental Affairs at Volvo Trucks.

Better exhaust filtration technology and lower emissions

Compared with conventional gas-powered spark-plug engines, Volvo's gas technology offers 30 to 40 percent higher efficiency, and this in turn cuts fuel consumption by 25 percent. This means that if a Volvo gas-powered truck is run on biogas, emissions of carbon dioxide would be able to be cut by up to 70 percent compared with a conventional diesel engine.
Since the price of natural gas is often significantly lower than that of diesel, financial savings are also possible; this is often a necessary precondition for widespread acceptance of new technology.

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"Natural gas is attracting considerable interest in many countries and regions the world over. This interest is being largely driven by environmental considerations as well as by concerns over the secure supply of energy. In the USA and parts of Asia, Europe and South America, gas power is either already in use or decisions have been taken to invest in this power source. Thailand, for instance, is well to the fore with an established infrastructure and good availability," explains Lars Mårtensson.

The Volvo FM MethaneDiesel will initially be sold in Europe. First off the mark will be the Netherlands, Great Britain and Sweden, where the gas infrastructure is best established. At present there are plans to build about 100 trucks in 2011. Series production will get under way in August. Other parts of the world will follow, as well as sales on additional European markets.

"If things go as planned, we expect sales to take off in 6-8 European countries within the next two years, with about 400 Volvo FM MethaneDiesel trucks sold a year. Future sales will naturally depend largely on expansion of liquefied gas filling stations for commercial vehicles," says Claes Nilsson.

Facts, Volvo FM MethaneDiesel

The Volvo FM MethaneDiesel is powered by up to 75% natural gas or biogas – both of which consist of methane gas. The engine technology is based on a conventional diesel engine equipped with gas injectors, a special Thermos-like fuel tank that keeps the gas liquefied and chilled to -140 degrees Celsius, and a specially modified catalytic converter. By using liquefied gas, more fuel can be stored in the tanks compared to if the fuel is compressed. This gives the methane-diesel truck a far greater range than that of traditional gas-powered trucks that utilise spark-plug technology. In a truck with a gross weight of 40 tonnes, the fuel tank holds enough gas for a range of up to 500 kilometres in normal driving.

The new Volvo FM MethaneDiesel is offered with a 13-litre engine producing 460 horsepower and 2300 Nm of torque. The fuel consists of up to 75 percent liquefied gas and the rest diesel, but the proportions can vary depending on how the vehicle is used.

Volvo Trucks' field tests show that methane-diesel technology offers the same high operating reliability as a conventional diesel engine. Driveability is similar to the one of a conventional diesel truck. If the gas tank runs dry, the system automatically switches over to diesel. The driver is alerted via a control lamp that comes on in the instrument panel.

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Film and animation:

Link to film
http://volvo.qbrick.com/index.aspx?cid=2&mode=3&mid=667

Link to film on Youtube
http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=YZFNY1R-T-s
(The Youtube link is hidden and not searchable until the publication time at May 31, CET 09.00.)

Link to animation
http://volvo.qbrick.com/index.aspx?cid=2&mode=3&mid=666

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Volvo Trucks provides complete transport solutions for professional and demanding customers. The company offers a full range of medium to heavy duty trucks. Customer support is secured via a global network of 2,300 dealers and workshops in more than 140 countries. Volvo trucks are assembled in 16 countries across the globe. In 2010 more than 75,000 Volvo trucks were delivered worldwide. Volvo Trucks is part of the Volvo Group, one of the world's leading manufacturers of trucks, buses and construction equipment, drive systems for marine and industrial applications, aerospace components and services. The Group also provides solutions for financing and service.