

NEWS From BoatU.S.

Boat Owners Association of The United States

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BoatU.S. Press Room at <http://www.BoatUS.com/pressroom>

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Photo Caption:

Big Change to the Nation's Gasoline Supply Awaits EPA Approval *Tight Timetable and Lack of Testing Could Impact Consumers*

ALEXANDRIA, Va., April 7, 2010 - This summer, the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) will decide on whether to allow a 50% increase in the amount of ethanol in the nation's gasoline supply, from the current E10 (or containing 10% ethanol) up to E15 (containing 15% ethanol). However, with testing data on the new "mid-level" ethanol formulation to be completed on only a small group of 2001 and newer model vehicles by this time frame, consumers with older cars, boats, non-road vehicles or gas-engine powered equipment may find that the fuel is not compatible or safe for use.

Boat Owners Association of The United States ([BoatU.S.](http://www.BoatU.S.)), the nation's largest boat owners group, is concerned. "Some of our members have advised us of performance, compatibility and possible safety issues with the current E10 blend," said BoatU.S. Vice President of Government Affairs Margaret Podlich. "To add 50% more ethanol to every gallon of gas without first knowing what it will do to the older vehicles and other gasoline engines we currently own, is simply irresponsible," she added.

The U.S. Coast Guard Office of Boating Safety has also raised concerns about higher levels of ethanol and the lack of independent testing. Ethanol, a strong solvent, can accelerate the deterioration of fuel system components such as fuel lines, causing them to fail and increasing the level of risk for fire or explosions.

Last year Growth Energy, the lobbying group for the ethanol industry, petitioned the EPA to allow the sale of "mid-level" ethanol blends beyond the current 10% (E10) up to the 15% level (E15). In a [November 30, 2009 response](#), the EPA advised Growth Energy that, "Although all of the studies have not been completed, our engineering assessment to date indicates that the robust fuel, engine, and emissions control systems on newer vehicles (likely 2001 and newer model years) will likely be able to accommodate higher ethanol blends, such as E15."

However, the nonpartisan Congressional Research Service (CRS), whose mission is to support an "informed national legislature," reports in a [January 28, 2010 Report for Congress](#) that the EPA's November response letter "Made no comment on the status of testing for older vehicles or for non-road engines". The CRS report also says, "Currently, no automaker warranties its vehicles to use gasoline higher than 10% ethanol," and "small engine manufacturers similarly limit the allowable level of ethanol."

The CRS report also says it's unclear if the current fuel distribution systems -- the pumps, tanks, delivery vehicles and underground gas lines -- can tolerate blends higher than E10. "Even if the fuel is approved by EPA for use in motor vehicles, presumably fuel suppliers could be unwilling to sell the fuel unless they are confident that it will not damage their existing systems or lead to liability issues in the future," the CRS reports.



The EPA could decide to add up to 50% more ethanol to the nation's gas supply, without testing it first to ensure it's safe for millions of older gasoline-powered vehicles and equipment in the U.S.

The report adds a comment by the independent certification and testing company Underwriters Laboratories saying, "Under normal business conditions E10 at the dispenser (fuel pump) can vary from about seven to 13 percent ethanol. Assuming a similar variance would exist for E15, it likely under normal conditions ethanol concentrations would exceed the 15% limit."

"We recognize that alternative fuels must be brought to market in the U.S.," said Podlich. "However, there is also a growing awareness among consumers that corn-based ethanol is not the environmental panacea it was thought to be several years ago. Increased food costs, changes in land use, and the energy required to produce ethanol are now giving many Americans second thoughts."

BoatU.S. is part of followthescience.org , a coalition of 46 motor sports, environmental, food and citizen advocate groups asking for "science first" before the EPA allows a new fuel on the market. BoatU.S. is also a member of [AIISAFE](http://AIISAFE.org) , the Alliance for a Safe Alternative Fuels Environment. The Association urges anyone who is concerned about a higher percentage of ethanol in gasoline and the lack of testing to contact their members of Congress.

About BoatU.S.:

BoatU.S. - Boat Owners Association of The United States - is the nation's leading advocate for recreational boaters providing over half a million members with government representation, programs and money saving services. For membership information visit www.BoatUS.com or call 800-395-2628.