

Joint UL/DOE Legacy System Certification Clarification

Recent articles in the media and technical references regarding permissible ethanol blends and blend limits associated with UL certifications have generated a lot of questions and led to confusion. These discussions around blended fuels are certainly complicated, especially as the topic continues to evolve. With political and industry focus on possibly increasing ethanol content for commonly used gasohol blends, UL would like to clarify limitations associated with current UL Listings to the standard UL 87.

Underwriters Laboratories Listed dispensers – those legacy dispensers currently in service and used most often in gas stations around the country today – are certified under UL 87 and are authorized for dispensing blends up to E10. Because UL often uses safety margins during testing, some subassemblies have been tested with fuels containing 15% ethanol, leading to some technical references to this level, but that does not mean that those dispensers are certified to dispense fuels containing greater than 10% ethanol.

UL is currently working with the Department of Energy (DOE) and the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) regarding their ongoing research to investigate the impact of using higher ethanol blends in current legacy vehicles and engine systems (that were not originally designed for use with ethanol blend levels above E10). If new Federal guidelines are established that approve higher ethanol blend levels for public use, UL will review products currently certified under UL 87 to determine whether UL can provide data enabling the authorities having jurisdiction to approve such use.

Underwriters Laboratories did announce the establishment of new safety requirements for higher ethanol fuel blend dispensing equipment on October 16, 2007. These requirements, titled Subject 87A, have been available to manufacturers looking to get their equipment tested and certified for ethanol fuel blends greater than 10% and up to 85%. This means that dispensing equipment evaluated to the requirements in Subject 87A would be considered to be acceptable for dispensing blends with any ethanol content up to 85%. UL will continue to test and certify new equipment to these higher-level blends as we work with the DOE and EPA regarding legacy systems.