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DELIVERING MORE FUEL MILEAGE

Army to get more bang for its buck by using reclaimed JP-8 in vehicles

Marisa Petrich/Northwest Guardian

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It's not uncommon for military vehicles to dump their fuel. But does anyone ever wonder where it all goes?

Soon Joint Base Lewis-McChord will be reusing the fuel removed from vehicles on the installation — and experiencing an immediate cost avoidance of \$27,720 in fuel alone.

“The Army’s actually going to use what they pay for,” JBLM’s Directorate of Public Works Hazardous Waste Program Manager Kyle Greer said.

Whether tanks need to be emptied for maintenance issues or to prepare them for a deployment, sometimes perfectly good fuel is taken out of vehicles. JBLM has been filtering this gently used fuel for further use since the 1990s, when the Army consolidated fuel so every vehicle uses the same kind (JP-8) — but it wasn’t until this week that the 593rd Sustainment Brigade helped establish a system to distribute and actually reuse it.

“We couldn’t give it away,” Greer said of the program up to this point.

In the past, DPW Environmental would filter the JP-8, send a sample to be certified as usable by an independent lab and try to entice units to come get it — but many were skeptical of the used fuel or reluctant to make the trek to the Installation Fuel Filtering Facility to retrieve it.

Instead, the unclaimed fuel, which is tested for clarity before use, was given away to off-base organizations. There wasn’t much else that could be done.

“Before, it would sit, sometimes for a whole year. After a year it gets wasted out,” Greer said.

Aside from the expense of purchasing new JP-8 for all the previously defueled vehicles, JBLM has to pay to dispose of it as a hazardous waste. This in turn hurts the installation’s annual waste report.

During the last three years, units generated 178,000 gallons of excess fuel, at a disposal cost of \$1,062,889 according to the JBLM Plans, Analysis and Integration Office.

That was then. Now the 593rd Sust. Bde. volunteered to take charge of the fuel. What can’t be used internally will be loaded into the brigade’s fuel trucks to be distributed to other units. Just as important, it’s a training opportunity for Soldiers in the 593rd’s 24th Quartermaster Company.

“It is very economic and mission oriented for the 593rd to step up to the plate,” PAIO management and program analyst Connie Lee said.

It was her job to come up with a way to make the fuel reutilization process more efficient, and one idea was to enlist the help of a unit that could transport the fuel throughout base. When it came up at a monthly working group aiming to streamline JBLM’s processes, Lt. Col. Dennis Kerwood, the 593rd’s Support Operations Officer, knew immediately it was a mission for them.

“Every time we see an opportunity to assist a unit with their sustainment requirements, that’s what we’re here to do,” Kerwood said.



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Spc. Charles Gill, left, and Spc. Shaquan Hollaway establishes a fuel flow of JP5 into a hose from the pumping system to one of the 593rd Sustainment Brigade’s tanker trucks at JBLM’s Installation Fuel Filtering Facility Oct. 18, 2011.



Aside from knowing his brigade had the means and the manpower to complete the task, it also has the connections to know who needs the JP-8 and when. But more than that, it's a rare opportunity for the fuel section of his quartermaster company to do what it does best.

"The benefit from my perspective, all of the money aside, is the training for my Soldiers. Because I've got a fuel section in my supply company that right now doesn't get a lot of fuel missions," he said.

Before, the fuel section might have had four fuel missions a year in garrison — but it's something they do every day downrange. Now they'll have a steadier stream of fuel to collect and distribute.

"The training is always better when you're doing an actual mission, and this was a perfect opportunity to do exactly that," he said.

After testing the fuel a second time at McChord's fuel lab, the 593rd will begin using it internally. Any excess will be delivered to units in need. If there's any left after that, the reutilized JP-8 will be issued from installation retail points whether units like it or not. The regular fuel point will actually be shut off until the reused fuel is depleted.

Making the fuel more convenient to JBLM units by delivering it, in turn, will help in other ways. Instead of logging every gallon of dumped fuel as hazardous waste, reusing the fuel will contribute to the JBLM's goal of becoming a net zero installation — that is, to become more sustainable by producing as much as it consumes.

"It actually becomes a recycling credit," Greer said.

Now that a secondary containment system has arrived to keep fuel from leaking into the ground when it's being transferred, the new system can start. The 593rd Sust. Bde. picked up 3,600 gallons of reused fuel from the IFFF for the first time on Tuesday, Oct. 18.

All told, there are benefits in just about every imaginable way.

"It was a win across the board," Lee said.

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