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Commercial Availability! Oberon Fuels Drives Down Emissions from Propane with New rDME/Propane Blend

May 1, 2022 | Helena Tavares Kennedy

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Commercialization – it's the ultimate goal, isn't it? Well, news just in from California that Oberon Fuels announced commercial availability of a new approach to drive down emissions across the propane industry: a blend of propane and Oberon's renewable DME (dimethyl ether) and that Suburban Propane is the first to offer commercial sales of the blended product in Southern California.

In today's Digest, get all the details on the Oberon Fuels announcement, reactions from the stakeholders, other recent news worth a look at from Oberon, and more.

Getting it to actual customers

Let's start with the fact that [Oberon Fuels is now offering commercial availability of a new approach to drive down emissions across the propane industry: a blend of propane and Oberon's renewable DME \(dimethyl ether\).](#)

What's the big deal about this blend? It replaces some of propane's fossil-derived fuel with a renewable one, enabling up to a 60 percent reduction in carbon emissions for this popular fuel used in vehicles, forklifts, farm equipment, backyard grills and outdoor heaters.

Beginning a few days ago, Oberon partner Suburban Propane Partners, L.P., the third largest propane supplier in the U.S., is the [first company to make this more sustainable blended product available to its customers across Southern California.](#)

Marvelous Maverick

The milestone builds on Oberon's 2021 start of commercial production at its Maverick plant in Brawley, California. Oberon's breakthroughs have benefited from California Energy Commission investment and Imperial County Workforce and Economic Development programs, helping to build local jobs and industrialization opportunities.

Another thing to note is that Oberon is moving forward on design and site acquisition for its second, larger commercial plant and is evaluating a pipeline of follow-on projects and partnerships around the world. Now that's getting things done.

The Fuel

Let's talk about the fuel. [Because rDME is similar to propane in its chemical structure, it can be blended with propane, transported in the same trucks, and used in similar applications,](#) while notably reducing greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions. For instance, if used as a 20% blend in all propane worldwide, Oberon's rDME could reduce GHGs by 750 million metric tons per year.

Each year, more than 170 million tons of propane are produced globally. While propane produces lower emissions than other fossil-based fuels, it is still responsible for 1.3 billion metric tons of GHGs each year, or over 2 percent of total global CO₂ emissions. Because Oberon's rDME fuel is made from waste and other renewable resources (such as renewable methanol from paper mill waste, or biogas from local farms), it has low, or even negative carbon emissions.



Reactions from the stakeholders

“Blending renewable DME (rDME) with propane can slash emissions and fits readily with existing storage, transportation and fueling infrastructure,” said Rebecca Boudreaux, Ph.D., President and CEO of Oberon. “Oberon’s rDME is a straightforward and scalable way for propane distributors and their customers to become more sustainable and will lead to overall emissions reductions from the propane sector which is a critical step to meeting global climate commitments.”

“Renewable DME offers our customers a simple way to reduce emissions, without the need to make significant investments in new technologies to meet decarbonization standards, which is increasingly important to them,” said Michael Stivala, President and Chief Executive Officer of Suburban Propane. “Blending Oberon’s rDME with propane is one of the key elements of our strategy to offer more sustainable options for the markets we serve and to support the overall energy transition with low carbon alternatives. We look forward to increasing both the blend rate and availability of the blended product in the coming months.”

Bottom Line

Here’s a Digest slide guide on Oberon Fuels, [“Renewable DME: The Digest’s 2020 Multi-Slide Guide to Oberon Fuels”](#) to give you a more visual look at the company and tech, but let’s also remember the long road they’ve traveled to get where they are today.

So here’s a brief look back on just a few months ago when Oberon said [rDME is an ideal carrier for hydrogen fuel and can be a hot green hydrogen solution](#) to keep an eye on. And back in 2020 [Suburban Propane purchased a 39% stake in Oberon](#), and more recently announced their collaboration with [Empresas Lipigas in Chile to evaluate rDME and propane blends in Latin America](#).

And let’s not forget when [Covid was wreaking havoc on the economy how Oberon combatted the pandemic economy with new hires and rDME facility upgrades](#) and even this past November how they [expanded their team to drive the commercial production](#) we talked about today. That’s to say they know what to do when times are good AND when times are bad and that’s key for success.