

INDUSTRY NEWS: SA's first bus to use ethanol Vehicle running on fuel that will reduce carbon emissions is being tested in Johannesburg MOTOR NEWS REPORTER Published: 2010/11/04 12:17:59 PM

REDUCING carbon emissions has become the new buzz phrase in the vocabulary of most businesses, and for good reason. The carbon disclosure project (CDP), an initiative aimed at gathering information on what companies around the world are doing to combat climate change, is the first real sign that global business is taking action voluntarily.

Analysts predict that in future businesses will be obliged legally to comply with CDP scorecard ratings by monitoring and publicly reporting on their greenhouse gas emissions. Companies that report high CDP ratings will most likely procure more business and maintain consumer loyalty better than those that do not.

"Businesses are thinking ahead and looking to reduce their environmental impact before it becomes mandatory to do so. Companies who adopt eco-friendly policies now will gain the competitive advantage in the future and will have built up goodwill in the market once government and industry regulations are officially put in place," says John Anderson, OEM key account manager at MiX Telematics .

This thinking has led to the first- ethanol powered bus, manufactured by Scania, being tested in SA.

"The use of ethanol has many benefits, the greatest of these being the reduction in carbon emissions. Ethanol is produced from sugar beet and the production of ethanol is creating job opportunities worldwide.

"According to research in SA, for every bus that runs on ethanol fuel two to three jobs are created in rural areas, where they are most needed. So not only will fewer carbon emissions enter the atmosphere, but many unemployed South Africans may find work. It makes sense to go this route," says Anderson.

The ethanol consumption in an engine is higher than diesel and the thought that worries most businessmen is how this fuel adjustment will affect their bottom line. Anderson says while it works out to be slightly more expensive using ethanol than diesel, for example, savings will come in the long run as businesses will pay less environmental tax.

He says that MiX Telematics has been developing and implementing fleet management technology designed specifically to meet the need for transport companies to reduce their carbon emissions.

"Companies that adopt this technology are able to measure and report accurately on their carbon emissions. By reducing fuel consumption, carbon emissions are reduced and our technology can make this a reality for companies such as Metrobus," he says.

"Our system measures fuel consumption and CO<sup>2</sup> emissions and clearly indicates whether the

vehicle is over the limits," says Anderson.

Also, the system monitors driver behaviour, records drivers' hours, advises when maintenance is needed, can be used to plan routes to ensure optimum fuel efficiency and can advise bus owners on what buses are best for which routes, for example a double-decker, single or flexible dual carriage, he says.

From mid-September reports emanating from the Scania ethanol- powered bus concluded that it has consumed 80l /100km and produced just 125g/km of CO<sup>2</sup> . An equivalent diesel bus would use 48l /100km of fuel, but will produce about 1285g/km of CO<sup>2</sup> .

"The relationship between Scania, Silversands Ethanol and Metrobus is not only creating the first ethanol-powered bus project, but the biofuels industry is seeing its first feasible project in SA's history. With MiX Telematics monitoring the system, the successes of this project can be traced and analysed in ways not done before.

"This project, although starting with buses, has far-reaching implications for the biofuels market in SA and Africa," says Anderson.