

Lycoming's Mike Kraft: Stop Loving The Avgas Problem And Fix It

July 25, 2010

By [Paul Bertorelli](#)
Editorial Director

Lycoming Engine general manager Michael Kraft continued to speak on the 100LL fuel replacement issue by urging pilots and owners to do a little speaking themselves: to their elected representatives and especially to the alphabets -- AOPA, EAA and NBAA. As he has in past weeks, Kraft continued an aggressive narrative on the avgas replacement effort at a forum at EAA AirVenture. Kraft told the audience that anything less than a 100-octane replacement or at least the equivalent performance will be at minimum a \$2 billion mistake and "it doesn't take more than one line on the back of an envelope to figure that out." Kraft said it's time to "stop loving the problem" and develop a clear, sure-footed approach to finding a replacement fuel.



Kraft outlined Lycoming's 10-point action plan, the two most important of which were putting pressure on the consensus-based ASTM International to address fuel approvals more quickly and for owners to insist that owner groups and alphabets get more aggressive in removing barriers to new fuel development. Further, the industry shouldn't waste its time trying to fight EPA efforts that will eventually regulate lead out of existence as an octane additive. In a sentiment we've heard several times here at AirVenture, Kraft said the problem is not technical, but political and procedural.

Industry Leaders: Don't Panic On Avgas

July 27, 2010

By [Paul Bertorelli](#)
Editorial Director

In an effort to calm rising fears over the apparent lack of discernible progress on finding a replacement for 100LL, leaders of all the major alphabets held a fuel forum at AirVenture on Tuesday that produced this overarching message: Aircraft owners and operators shouldn't panic about the future lack of a 100LL replacement just yet, but they reiterated that the challenge of finding an avgas replacement is complex and won't be solved quickly. Jim Coyne, president of the National Air Transportation Association, told the group of reporters, manufacturers and industry representatives that the simple truth is that political and regulatory issues impact the availability of fuel across all markets and aviation is tiny speck of the big picture. "This is not the time for us to panic," Coyne said, "but we also can't stick our heads the sand, either." Coyne owns a Baron with a pair of IO-520s and says he's fully confident fuel will be available for his aircraft and that he wouldn't hesitate to invest in the overhauls.



On the other hand, the panel heard direct concerns from people who don't share Coyne's sanguine view of future fuel availability. Although members of the industry's future fuel committee continue to insist that octane is only one consideration in the development of a new fuel, owners and operators show signs of believing it's the most important consideration. Curt Sanford, a member of the Cirrus Owners and Pilots Association, bluntly told the panel that 94-octane is simply too low and the fact that it has even been under consideration has created "a lot of anxiety" in the market. More push came from Jon Sisk, a member of The Clean 100-Octane Coalition, a recently formed group that's buttonholing the alphabets and FAA to at least agree that 100-octane or the equivalent performance ought to at least be the stated goal.

AOPA's Craig Fuller, who has recently taken a more visible role in talking about avgas, said although the association hasn't necessarily reported in detail about its activities in massaging the regulatory process, it is pushing on smoothing the regulatory barriers stacked against approving new fuels, including an STC application that General Aviation Modifications Inc. has requested for its developmental G100UL. "Let's go forward with that and let's see what we can learn from the process," Fuller said.

The FAA's Mark Rumizen, an official in the agency's Engine and Propellor Directorate, told the fuel panel that the FAA has now agreed in principle that STCs can be used as one means to fast track fuels research. It's unclear exactly how quickly that will translate into an approved STC. However, Rumizen and others in the fuel research arena insist that new fuels will still need to wind their way through the sometimes cumbersome ASTM International. At a meeting last month in Kansas City, ASTM got the message that it needs to accelerate its deliberations.

EPA On Lead In Fuel: No Immediate Deadline

July 27, 2010

By [Paul Bertorelli](#)

Editorial Director

The Environmental Protection Agency told GA's Avgas Coalition that the agency "has not established or proposed any date by which lead emissions from aircraft operating on leaded avgas would need to be reduced. In fact, the EPA does not have authority to control aviation fuels." The EPA's statement came in a response to a request for a clarification on the EPA's position on the future of lead regulation and clean air standards.



The EPA's Margo Tsigotis Oge said the EPA's job is to determine which chemical or physical properties of a fuel or additive might endanger public health. But she also noted that only the FAA has the authority to regulate which fuels aircraft are allowed to burn. AOPA said Tuesday that the EPA assured the avgas coalition that it recognizes the value of general aviation, especially piston-powered general aviation, to the nation and the national economy.

100LL: FAA's Babbitt Contradicts EPA Statement

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By: [Glenn Pew](#)

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FAA administrator Randy Babbitt appeared to contradict Tuesday's statement by the EPA that it doesn't have the authority to regulate or control the use of tetraethyl lead in avgas. In answering a question at a press conference at EAA AirVenture on Wednesday, Babbitt said, in part, "We have some pretty good studies undergoing ... ATSM process is developing the standards for new unleaded fuel and we've had some pretty good discussions with the EPA. They've been cooperative and helpful. The EPA of course has the ability and they have the statutory authority, in fact, to say there will be no more lead in fuel. We have asked them to please don't get ahead of us. Let us develop the standards so that we will have an easily deliverable safe efficient fuel that performs just like 100 leaded fuel does today and let us get that in place and, the time track that we're both on, I'm very comfortable that we will have a suitable deliverable alternative fuel long before the EPA says no more." The EPA earlier this week offered a different understanding of its role.

On Tuesday, AOPA reported that EPA responded to a request for clarification on the EPA's position on the future of lead regulation and clean air standards. The Environmental Protection Agency told GA's industry Avgas Coalition that the agency "has not established or proposed any date by which lead emissions from aircraft operating on leaded avgas would need to be reduced. In fact, the EPA does not have authority to control aviation fuels." Again, Babbitt said Wednesday, "The EPA of course has the ability and they have the statutory authority, in fact, to say there will be no more lead in fuel."

AirVenture 2010: Avgas — Top 'Er Off with 100 Gallons of Muddled Message

July 28, 2010

By [Paul Bertorelli](#)

Editorial Director

In a moment of absolute delusional optimism, when I left for Oshkosh last week, I secretly thought that AirVenture would, at long last, produce the briefest, shining glimpses of clarity about a replacement for 100LL. My wild fantasy was that a path out of the mire would at least become visible, if not negotiable.

Sadly, just the opposite has happened thus far, leaving me to wonder if anyone in our government is even remotely capable of getting *anything* never mind *everything* into the same sock. When I got back to our press trailer Tuesday evening after an industry fuels briefing, waiting in my inbox was a press release from AOPA quoting EPA as saying

essentially that it hasn't set a timeline for eliminating 100LL and, anyway, it doesn't have the authority to do that.

Huh? In other words, is the EPA saying, hey, just kiddin'...we can't do anything about that nasty old lead in your fuel? Here's the exact quote from Margo Tsirigotis Oge, director of EPA's Office of Transportation and Air Quality: "EPA has not established or proposed any date by which lead emissions from aircraft operating on leaded avgas would need to be reduced. In fact EPA does not have authority to control aviation fuels." You can judge for yourself what this statement means. Don't get your pants snagged on parsing "control aviation fuels." EPA has full statutory control over the components that go into avgas, not the gas itself. I'll let you apply your own metric about how disingenuous that statement really is.

So along comes FAA Administrator Randy Babbitt on Wednesday with this quote: "...We've had some pretty good discussions with the EPA. They've been cooperative and helpful. The EPA of course has the ability and they have the statutory authority, in fact, to say there will be no more lead in fuel..." Just in case you think we're making this up, check the video on the AvWeb website. I think Babbitt's statement is clear, unambiguous and correct. I don't think the question that prompted the quote was a blindside. I do think his support staff failed him in not informing him about what EPA said on Tuesday because I'm sure he would like to have known that what he was saying was in direct conflict with what EPA said the day before. We asked the FAA's PR team with a follow-up with Babbitt and they said they'd take it under advisement. But I'm not sure he could make his view any clearer than he did. Unless he says the flight safety card trumps all and that the EPA can be made to agree that continuing use of lead--like forever--is a worthy tradeoff between environmental threat and air safety. I don't hear anyone saying that. Yet.

To describe this as a muddled message is to give a bad name to the very word muddled. But the larger consideration is even worse. AOPA's headline on the press release said this: "EPA Tells GA Avgas Coalition That the Agency Is Committed to Working with Industry, Sets No Deadline for Unleaded Avgas." This notion was also advanced at the fuel briefing on Tuesday and it is exactly the wrong message to be sending now.

I know why it is being sent. It's a tamp down—an attempt to keep owners from panicking about fuel availability. But the way the message is likely to be interpreted is...don't worry, be happy. We've got another 20-year waiver. We've got plenty of time to solve this problem. AOPA shouldn't be behind this message, although it's right to try to seek just the right tone between complacency and panic. I recognize that this is not easy, but having the EPA essentially imply that well, there really is no deadline is just setting up the industry for a bigger fall two or three years from now. We've got to stop doing this and step up meeting this challenge.

As the Clean 100-Octane Coalition's Jon Sisk told me Wednesday, if we're going to attract innovators and entrepreneurs to risk capital to build the new fuels, we can't do that by (a) having government agencies express diametrically opposed policy statements and

(b) having our own industry groups sign on to this in order to minimize the problem for the short term. *If you want a bigger mess, just keep putting this off.*

Can't we do any better than this? My view is that we as users, owners and operators ought to challenge the FAA and EPA to give clearer, more consistent policy statements. I didn't see that this week.