

Aviation Groups Unified in Request to EPA on Fuels

June 10, 2010 —Leaders from the general aviation and petroleum industries met recently and formed a coalition to work together and develop a process to reduce lead emissions from GA aircraft, balancing environmental benefit with aviation safety, technical feasibility, and impact upon the GA industry. The group wants to ensure that a stable aviation fuel supply exists in the near term while the long term solution is identified, certified, and implemented. At this stage, all potential solutions, including lower octane fuels, higher octane candidates, and chemical or bio additives, remain as possible options.

The coalition's first meeting in May was attended by decision-makers, including several of the groups' CEOs, from the Aircraft Owners and Pilots Association (AOPA), the American Petroleum Institute (API), the Experimental Aircraft Association (EAA), the General Aviation Manufacturers Association (GAMA), the National Air Transportation Association (NATA), the National Business Aviation Association (NBAA), and the National Petrochemical and Refiners Association (NPR).

As its first action, the coalition has requested a 120-day extension to an Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) advance notice of proposed rulemaking (ANPR) in order to provide the most accurate and up-to-date information to the agency as possible. The extension will allow time to gather and evaluate data from the Coordinating Research Council on an ultra-low-lead fuel as a possible near-term interim solution, and to provide aircraft and engine manufacturers time to further assess the technical, economic, safety, and performance impacts associated with the possibility of moving to an unleaded fuel in the long term.

The aviation and petroleum industries have been working diligently for two decades to develop a seamless, high-octane replacement unleaded avgas that meets the requirements of the entire GA fleet. To date, no such fuel has been proven to be available or viable, although work continues in this direction. The collaborative program being undertaken by this group will evaluate the body of research that has been conducted over the past twenty years and will further evaluate the work currently being performed in order to arrive at the best possible solution.

The organizations participating in this coalition are committed to working with the EPA, FAA, the petroleum and aviation industries. The regulatory affairs staff from all of the associations are continuing their coordination with government agencies on the myriad of technical, safety, logistical, and economic issues. It is critical that aircraft owners and fuel distributors have sufficient time and information to comply with a realistic standard to reduce lead emissions from GA aircraft.