

WASTE & RECYCLING NEWS

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NEW PRODUCTS & TECHNOLOGY

Fla. hauler makes choice to go green

By Chris Gigley

Trash collection in Fort Lauderdale, Fla., became a little greener in November, when Choice Environmental Services put its fleet of 10 compressed natural gas waste collection trucks to work.

Choice Environmental, a residential, commercial, institutional and industrial provider of solid waste and recycling services throughout South Florida, added an 11th CNG truck in January. Each truck is purported to reduce emissions by 25% compared to diesel-powered trucks.

"The trucks have performed as well as expected and better," said chairman and CEO Glen Miller. "Our drivers have adapted to the motors well. A few of them are even saying they'd rather drive a CNG truck than diesel. There's a lot less noise, no smoke or exhaust, and they don't have to worry about fueling the truck with diesel."

The trucks use chassis by Autocar LLC and Cummins Westbrock engines designed to run on natural gas power. They also feature E-Z Pack Manufacturing's high-compaction bodies, which helps reduce the number of trips to the landfill. Each truck has a 6-cubic-yard hopper that can handle 400-gallon containers.

But the feature that has drawn the most attention from local residents is the

bold, beach-scene graphics on the trucks. Director of special projects Ray Peraino said the local media has also noticed, giving the company plenty of unsolicited positive coverage. Miller said he thinks that should help lead to more business and contracts in the future.

"Customers down here are excited about seeing someone doing something to keep the environment clean," Miller said.

The decision to go to natural gas wasn't cheap. In addition to the trucks, the company spent money on a new Pompano Beach fueling station, designed, built and operated by Clean Energy Fuels Corp. Clean Energy provides CNG and liquefied natural gas and has 195 locations in the U.S. and Canada fueling more than 17,500 vehicles. The Pompano Beach station has 30 fueling points designed to refuel trucks overnight.

Altogether, Miller said the investment was "probably in the \$5 million range." But he added that the company expects to save on fuel costs in the long term.

"How much we save will depend on the spread in the differential of diesel and CNG costs," he said. "Right now, we're experiencing between 20% and 30% savings on fuel. Additionally, we believe we'll see savings in maintenance and longevity of the vehicles because CNG is a much cleaner-



Choice Environmental Services has 11 waste collection trucks that use compressed natural gas. The trucks use chassis by Autocar LLC and Cummins Westbrock engines designed to run on natural gas power.

burning fuel."

Plans are already underway for a second fueling station on property the company owns in Dade County. Miller said that station would offer public access for municipalities, trucking companies and any other entity with CNG vehicles. It would be the first fueling station of its kind in South Florida. Miller said the closest station with public access currently is in Atlanta.

Peraino, who worked with Clean Energy to plan and build the Pompano Beach station, is currently assessing now many fueling points the Dade station can have. The plan is to install larger compressors to do fast-fill applications in addition to slow-fill to accommodate

external users who don't have time for overnight fueling. A fast-fill for a CNG-powered pickup truck can take less than five minutes.

The Dade station plan is a natural progression in Choice Environmental's aggressive green initiative.

The company already offers its clients recycling services and has two recycling centers in the area. It also equips its trucks with oil purification systems that reduce the amount of oil the trucks require.

"What we want to offer our clients and the people of South Florida is a total clean environment solution, and (using CNG trucks) is just taking it a step further," Peraino said. ■