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Coming soon: Homewood Disposal makes compressed natural gas available to the public

By Eric Crump on Mon, 07/25/2016 - 02:42



Homewood Disposal founder Wendell Yonker, center left, and Homewood Mayor Richard Hofeld, center right, cut the ribbon to mark the opening of Homewood Disposal's new compressed natural gas fueling facility. With them, from left, are Chad Yonker and, behind him, Chad Harris of Service Sanitation, Richton Park Village President Rick Reinbold and Kyle Yonker of Homewood Disposal.
(Photo by Peter Clevering/Homewood Disposal)

There might be relatively few vehicles running on compressed natural gas, but if the alternative fuel catches on, Homewood will be ready.

Homewood Disposal held a ribbon-cutting ceremony Thursday, July 21, to unveil its new CNG fueling facility at 1501 W. 175th St. in Homewood, and it includes a public

fueling station.

The primary purpose of the facility is to fuel the company's growing fleet of CNG-powered trucks, but the public pump means Homewood will now be a fueling stop for anyone in the area operating a CNG-powered commercial or passenger vehicle.

Homewood Disposal General Manager Tom Agema said adding the public station to the project was part of the company's funding arrangement with Chicago Metropolitan Agency for Planning, but it's also a way to support the growth of the alternative fuel industry.

"What comes first the chicken or the egg? How can people go out and buy CNG vehicles if there's no place to fuel up?" he said. "This gives them an opportunity. As (CNG) becomes more prominent, you're going to see these stations up on Halsted."

The public fueling station can accommodate anything from a subcompact car to a semi, according to Clean Energy representatives at the event. Clean Energy, a company that providing natural gas fuels and services, designed and built the Homewood Disposal facility.

Clean Energy technician Scott Diesem demonstrated how to use a CNG pump. The procedure is similar to using gasoline or diesel fuel pumps.



A CNG hose end has a small lever that must be turned to lock the coupling with the vehicle tank. Another difference is a 30-second limit on the time between activating the pump and starting to fuel. Diesem said that time limit is intended to prevent gas theft.

Clean Energy technician Scott Diesem demonstrates how the CNG fuel pump works.

The dispenser's display is almost identical to gas and diesel pumps. CNG is measured by volume per square foot and pressure, but the price and amount are displayed in terms of gasoline-gallon equivalents to give consumers a familiar point of comparison. One GGE equals the energy generated by one gallon of gasoline.

The cost and mileage are comparable to gas and diesel, too, Diesem said. In Homewood on Sunday regular gasoline prices ranged from \$2.15 to \$2.55 per gallon. The price in GGE posted on the Homewood Disposal public pump was \$2.39.

Diesem and Brian Houston, Clean Energy senior business development manager, touted the safety of CNG fueling stations compared to gas or diesel.

Diesem noted the CNG pump has a quick-release coupling in the hose. The coupling detaches automatically and a valve seals the hose if a driver attempts to leave without properly detaching the hose and little or no gas will escape. Little or no gas can escape, he said.

Houston said in case safety measures fail and there is a leak, natural gas dissipates rapidly, virtually eliminating the

possibility of fire or explosion. He said natural gas explosions that make the news are usually in cases where gas is contained in a structure and ignited.

The project has been in planning since 2010, according to Agema. In 2012, the company established a CNG fueling station in Park Forest to serve its first CNG-powered trucks.

But this is not the first time the company has used natural gas in its fleet.

Kyle Yonker, representing the third generation of his family to manage Homewood Disposal, said environmental stewardship was a principal established by his grandfather, company founder Wendell "Wendy" Yonker.

When the project began, Kyle said he was excited to tell his grandfather about it. But Wendell was less amazed than his grandson expected.

"He said, 'Oh, I did that. Back in the 70s we ran propane trucks. It's natural gas,'" Kyle said. "So that proved three points. Homewood has been concerned with the environment and alternative fuels for a long time. The greatest generation is always right. And the third generation isn't as smart as we think we are."

The elder Yonker might have been ahead of his time with the use of natural gas vehicles, but he said he was impressed with what his descendants had accomplished and was excited by the possibilities new technologies offer.

Homewood Mayor Richard Hofeld was on hand to help Wendell Yonker cut the ribbon marking the opening of facility. He congratulated the company on the accomplishment.

"CNG is clean, affordable, abundant. Best of all, it's non-toxic and is not a threat to land or water. We certainly cherish the Izaak Walton Preserve next door," Hofeld said. "There are currently approximately 500 public CNG fueling stations across the united states. We welcome Homewood Disposal with site 501."

The public fueling station is expected to open early in August. Hours will be Mondays through Fridays from 6 a.m. to 6 p.m. and Saturdays from 6 a.m. to 11 p.m.

More information:

www.mydisposal.com/ (<http://www.mydisposal.com/>)
www.cmap.illinois.gov/ (<http://www.cmap.illinois.gov/>)
www.cleanenergyfuels.com
(<http://www.cleanenergyfuels.com>) .

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