Fleet Reduction

Here is a quick way to trim fuel costs for fleets of government vehicles: Reduce the size of the fleets. Berkeley Lab has done so, in short order, and is leading the nation in that effort.

By the end of 2010, the Lab operated only 166 highway-rated vehicles, down 36 percent from 2005. That was when Nobel Laureate Steven Chu, director of Berkeley Lab at the time, decided there were too many cars, trucks, and buses on site and ordered a systematic reduction.

After Chu was named Secretary of Energy by President Barack Obama, the fleet-reduction goal set at Berkeley Lab became policy for the Department of Energy (DOE). By 2014, all DOE facilities are required to trim their fleets by 35 percent from the baseline year 2005.

Fleet reduction was accomplished by returning cars and trucks to the General Services Administration and by tightening the rules for use of the Lab’s vehicles. Staffers who wish to obtain a government vehicle must first ask permission of the fleet manager, with final approval required from the Chief Operating Officer. Those needing to travel offsite in lab vehicles are asked to carpool together.

Today, Berkeley Lab’s fleet is not only smaller, but increasingly is powered by non-petroleum fuels. Sustainability plans at Berkeley Lab call for all Lab-owned vehicles to run on alternative fuels by 2020. Currently, one-in-four fleet vehicles is electric-powered. Half of the remaining vehicles run on E-85 (85-percent ethanol), supplied by an on-site ethanol pump.