

CASE STUDY: POLK COUNTY SHERIFF'S OFFICE

BACKGROUND

Like many law enforcement agencies, the Polk County Sheriff's Office in Oregon had been researching cost-saving avenues for many areas of their budget, including its 10-vehicle fleet, due to budget cuts. Many options were researched, but only one had an appropriate return. In 2011, Blue Star Gas, the western state Alliance AutoGas partner, approached Sergeant Garton about converting their fleet to propane autogas. It wasn't until the following year however that Sergeant Garton was truly motivated by another round of budget cuts to bring his research to Sheriff Bob Wolfe. Spurred by a presentation given by Blue Star Gas at the Oregon State Sheriffs' Association Conference, Sergeant Garton arranged a test drive with Blue Star Gas. He quickly identified propane autogas as the best fit for their fleet based on the vehicle performance, return on investment, and the bi-fuel system, which provides two fuel sources on the vehicle for prolonged emergency situations.

THE PROGRAM

Polk County worked with an Alliance AutoGas conversion partner to convert all 10 vehicles to run on propane autogas, using the Prins VSI system. With all 10 fleet vehicles on propane autogas, the Sheriff's office has saved over \$32,000 in its first year of conversion, which does not include the available federal tax credits. Not only has this allowed the department to achieve their budget goals, but it saved the job of one full-time sheriff deputy.

As is the case with many law enforcement offices, the bi-fuel component of the Prins system was critical to the department's ability to operate alternative fuel vehicles. They run primarily on autogas whenever possible, but knowing that the engine automatically switches to gasoline in the event they cannot reach an autogas fueling station provides peace of mind and redundancy in cases of prolonged emergency situations.

WORKING WITH BLUE STAR GAS

"From the beginning, the service has been great," says Sergeant Garton. Garton also states that Blue Star Gas was there every step of the way, completing all preliminary work needed to ensure a quick turnaround on the vehicle conversions, as well as infrastructure implementation. Working with Blue Star Gas also afforded the department another level of comfort, based on their extensive knowledge and experience of the fuel and the conversion systems. Sergeant Garton cited Blue Star Gas as being "very responsive to any questions, concerns or needs," which allowed for quick buy-in with the department's staff.

In addition to the vehicle conversions, Blue Star Gas provided Polk County Sheriff's Office with on-site fueling, ongoing safety training and technical support.



Sergeant Mark Garton
Polk County, Oregon

FLEET STATISTICS

FLEET TYPE:

Law Enforcement

PERCENT OF FLEET RUNNING ON AUTOGAS: 100%

AUTOGAS VEHICLES IN FLEET:

10 (7 Ford Crown Victorias; 2 Chevy Tahoes; 1 Ford F-350)

ANNUAL COST SAVINGS:

\$30,000 - \$35,000

With autogas use versus gasoline gallon equivalent

ANTICIPATED ANNUAL USAGE

(Gallons propane autogas):

25,000 - 30,000

GREENHOUSE GAS EMISSIONS

ELIMINATED (In pounds):

67,400

AUTOGAS FUELING:

On-site autogas fueling infrastructure including 1,000-gallon autogas tank and fuel management system.

YEAR OF CONVERSION:

2013

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RESULTS AND AUTOGAS BENEFITS

The Sheriff's office's chose propane autogas due to the quick return on investment and cost-savings it would bring the department. In less than one year, the department has saved over \$30,000 with 10 vehicles, not including the available federal tax credits. Additionally, the savings prevented the loss of one employee's job. Although environmental impact wasn't the primary factor in the selection process, the Sheriff's office newly converted fleet saved over 67,000 pounds of greenhouse gases from contaminating our air.

Polk County's deputies are pleased with the superior performance of their vehicles while running on autogas. Although Sergeant Garton was concerned that the team would be skeptical and slow to adapt the conversions, the process was quick and easy.

MOVING FORWARD

"I would do it again in a heartbeat," said Sergeant Garton. "Although the initial spend is high, we'll break even within 18 months. If people could drive our converted vehicles, the real-life example would cure any skepticism. Propane autogas is a great alternative and was the best choice for us."



Polk County Sheriff's Office on-site fueling infrastructure



One of the department's Chevy Tahoes



The autogas tank inside a Crown Victoria