Lubrication Checkup: Aftermarket Additives

Written by By Dr. Lube, aka Ken Bannister Monday, 19 April 2010 16:26



Symptom:

"I am an instructor in a college Industrial Maintenance program. Do you have any information regarding testing and comparison of aftermarket oil additives and their use?"

Diagnosis:

Yours is probably one of the most frequently asked questions in my lubrication training seminars—and one of the most difficult to answer since there is little available research that can be used to rate and compare the popular "supermarket" additive products that are currently available. Fortunately, we can classify additive products in two categories:

- 1. Industrial additive products—marketed as an enhancement or replenishment to a known compatible industrial base oil stock.

 They're sold primarily through industrial representatives to meet your specific need, come with a published specification and compatibility testing data sheet, and are often backed up with a manufacturer's engineering service.
- 2. Consumer additive products—what many people think of as additives. They're what we typically see on midnight infomercials. Although these types of products are often targeted at the consumer automotive market, many of them find their way into the industrial world.

Prescription:

Users must carefully weigh their decision to use these types of products against a number of facts:

- Why are you considering using them in the first place? If an engine or device has an underlying internal-wear problem, why not just move to a higher-viscosity regular oil and raise a planned repair work order to fix the problem? If you're looking for better fuel mileage or energy savings, consider a synthetic lubricant.
- Is the product compatible with your host oil? If testing and comparison data is difficult to attain, and no product engineering service is available, contact the manufacturer directly and

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ask for a compatibility statement along with instructions on how to blend the additive prior to use. In a best-practice lube program, we never advocate mixing lubricants due to a good chance of incompatibility.

Remember, there is no maintenance panacea, especially in the world of lubrication. When failure consequences can be high, the rule of thumb is to always let the additive manufacturer recommend the use of the additive. **MT**

Lubrication questions? E-mail: doctorlube@atpnetwork.com. Dr. Lube, aka Ken Bannister, is a featured speaker at MARTS 2010. To register for and/or learn more about his value-added Pre-Conference workshop "Liquid Gold: Implementing a Winning Lube Strategy for Maximum Gain," visit www.MARTSconference.com.