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The use of clean fuel biodiesel is becoming increasingly popular on studio lots.

The majority of Hollywood studios have solar panels supplementing power supplies on their lots, but when it comes to the down and dirty task of powering productions shooting on location, the sun's rays simply don't provide enough juice. So increasingly productions looking for green energy alternatives -- such as CBS' "CSI: Crime Scene Investigation" and Fox's "American Idol" -- are turning to biodiesel.

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"If you want to reduce your emissions right now, switching to biodiesel is very easy," says Jason Hoar, president of AgriFuels, a biodiesel consulting firm that has worked with a variety of Hollywood productions. "And if you look at the studios and the emissions that they produce, fuel usage is number one or two right next to electricity."

As simple as going biodiesel is, there's been a bit of a learning curve for some of the vendors supplying the generators, trucks and other diesel-powered equipment.

"When you say, 'I want to use biodiesel,' a lot of people just think you're taking the grease left over from McDonald's

and trying to put it in the back of a generator," says Joshua Mark, executive director of special event production creative services at Fox Broadcasting. "They don't understand that it's a refined, government-regulated, quality fuel that's compatible with regular diesel and is dramatically better for the environment."

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It works like this: vegetable oils or animal fats are combined with alcohol (ethanol or methanol) and chemically converted into glycerin and fatty acid esters (ethyl or methyl esters) that can be used alone or in combination with traditional petroleum-based diesel fuel to power diesel engines.

"Basically, you can use pure biodiesel one day, regular petroleum the next or any blend in between," Hoar says. "There's a little caveat for older vehicles -- you may have to change your natural rubber fuel line to a compatible material. It's very simple, but you have to know what the difference is before you start, because if someone just puts biodiesel in old diesel and their filter clogs, they say, 'Oh, this is not working!' That's not true. You just have to know what to do. That's my job -- make sure everyone is educated."

Hoar's consulting business started five years ago when he helped friend Willie Nelson convert his tour bus to biodiesel, and in the years since it has expanded to include other touring musical acts.

"We basically help source the quality fuel," Hoar says. "I have 180 locations around the country that we know do it right."



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A year and a half ago, Hoar was approached by Philip Conserva, co-producer of "CSI," to assist them with the implementation of a biodiesel program, which led to work other Hollywood productions, such as on Fox's telecast of "The 2008 Teen Choice Awards," which used biodiesel to power the generators for the blue carpet (made from recycled plastic bottles), the press areas and the staging. Solar panels were also used at the event, but the energy captured wasn't used directly -- it was sent into the LADWP grid.

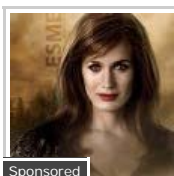
Fox used similar set-ups for last year's "American Idol" finale and the 2007 Emmy Awards. It also used biodiesel to power the buses used to transport people for this year's broadcasts of the Super Bowl and the BCS Championship game.

"It all goes back to education," Mark concludes. "Once (the vendors) understand why we're doing this and how to do it, they get a lot more comfortable. And if they try it for us, the next person who asks, it's going to be a lot easier for them do it."

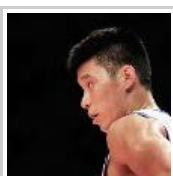
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