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EPA Offers Grants to Fleets to Help Buy 'Greener' Trucks

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The Environmental Protection Agency last week launched a program that could give fleet owners up to 25% of a new vehicle's cost for every diesel truck it replaces with a diesel-electric hybrid, liquefied natural gas or other alternate-fueled engine.

Suzanne Ackerman, EPA spokeswoman, said the grants are funded by the \$156 million National Clean Diesel Funding Assistance Program, part of the federal economic stimulus legislation.

The grants are in addition to federal tax credits of \$6,000 to \$12,000 per vehicle.

Eaton Corp., Kalamazoo, Mich., maker of hybrid power systems used by four major truck manufacturers, said that it has established a program to assist diesel truck fleet owners applying for the EPA grants, which require proof that an existing diesel truck has been taken out of service for each new hybrid purchased.

Also last week, Kenworth Truck Co., one of Paccar's heavy-duty truck subsidiaries, said it would help customers buying their LNG trucks to apply for the EPA grants.

Daimler Trucks North America and Paccar Inc. both make trucks that use liquefied natural gas rather than diesel fuel. The engines are from Cummins Inc., modified by Westport Innovations Inc. to run on LNG.

Dontia Warren, Eaton market development manager, told Transport Topics the company's hybrid system adds \$40,000 to \$50,000 to the price of a truck but that purchasers "can make up the premium over a five-year period by combining the . . . funding with the IRS tax credit and the fuel and operating savings."

Joe Suchecki, spokesman for the Engine Manufacturers Association, told TT, "EPA will award grants on a competitive basis that depends on several priorities, which they outline in the program."

Suchecki said private fleets cannot directly apply for the grants, "so a program to assist fleets in identifying eligible partners and help on the applications will be helpful."