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Ricardo launches consortium to evaluate lubricant challenges of future low carbon engine technologies

With the environmental demand to reduce CO₂ emissions and take vehicle fuel economy to new levels, significant innovations in lubricants will be needed to enable implementation of many very promising low friction and high efficiency engine technologies and increasing use of biofuels

While previous advances in engine technology have been based on separate and parallel developments by the fuels and lubricants industries, it is increasingly apparent that further significant improvements in diesel and gasoline engine fuel economy will require an integrated approach between automakers, tier 1 equipment providers, oil companies and lubricant additive manufacturers. By bringing together interested parties from each of these industry sectors, Ricardo aims to create a framework in which fundamental challenges in this area can be investigated and researched in a pre-competitive manner for the mutual benefit of participating companies.

Particular areas of interest for the consortium include: the implications of extreme engine downsizing and increased specific power; tolerance to increasing volumes of exhaust gas recirculation in combustion systems (with consequent issues for soot in oil, wear and sludge formation); the chemical impacts on lubricants of biofuel dilution; advanced component designs and new material applications, and; the drive towards thinner, lower viscosity lubricants for reduced friction. The work of the consortium will be structured into a series of modules, the first of which will focus on the effect of downsized light duty gasoline and diesel engine technologies on lubricant soot levels and engine wear. Subsequent modules – to be discussed and agreed in advance by the participating members – are likely to focus on enabling ultra-low viscosity lubricants and their potential benefits in terms of friction reduction on fuel consumption, and lubricant effects on emissions and aftertreatment performance in future engines.



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Commenting on the launch of the new consortium, Ricardo project director for fuels and lubricants, Craig Goodfellow, said:

“In order to enable the next crucial steps to be made on the path to improving fuel economy and reducing the carbon emissions of road transport, it is essential that the oil, lubricant additive and automotive industries can work together. In launching this pre-competitive consortium based research programme, we aim to enable participating companies to pull-forward robust solutions to some of the fundamental challenges we face in delivering new standards in fuel efficiency and reduced CO₂.”

The consortium announced today has already generated interest from many leading oil companies, lubricant additive manufacturers and automakers, and is currently open to applications from prospective members in advance of its first meeting of interested parties in October 2009. Companies wishing to register an interest in participating or obtain further information should contact LubesConsortium@ricardo.com.

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NOTES TO EDITORS:

Ricardo plc: With technical centres and offices in the UK, USA, Germany, the Czech Republic, France, Italy, Russia, China, Japan, India and Korea, Ricardo is a leading independent technology provider and strategic consultant to the world's transportation sector industries. The company's engineering expertise ranges from vehicle systems integration, controls, electronics and software development, to the latest driveline and transmission systems and gasoline, diesel, hybrid and fuel cell powertrain technologies. Its customers include the world's major vehicle, engine and transmission manufacturers, tier 1 suppliers and leading motorsport teams. Ricardo is committed to excellence and industry leadership in people, technology and knowledge; approximately 70 per cent of its employees are highly qualified multi-disciplined professional engineers and technicians. A public company, Ricardo plc posted sales of £197.7 million in financial year 2008 and is a constituent of the FTSE techMark 100 index – a group of innovative technology companies listed on the London Stock Exchange. For more information, visit www.ricardo.com.

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