

Non-approved use of HCs as refrigerants in vehicle air/con systems

May 2015

Priority: Urgent Necessary For information

Circulate: Driver Operator Workshop Parts Fleet Manager

The incident or issue:

Through the work of its Industry Technical Council, the ATA has been alerted to a number of reports of incidents where aftermarket hydrocarbon based refrigerants were used to recharge air conditioning systems. These gases are highly flammable and the incidents resulted in injuries that would not have occurred had the original refrigerant gas been installed.

Hydrocarbon gases have a lower purchase cost and have been promoted as being an environmentally friendly refrigerant within the aftermarket segment of the transport industry as a replacement for the approved R134a in vehicle systems and R404a in commercial units.

Incident cause:

A truck cab air conditioning system was re-charged with a hydrocarbon based refrigerant similar to M30. The system leaked and the gas pooled in the HVAC system, which was ignited when the unit's fan was turned on resulting in the driver receiving burns.

Solution:

There are no known heavy commercial vehicle or refrigerant equipment suppliers to the transport industry who have approved the use on hydrocarbon based refrigerants.

Hydrocarbon refrigerants will potentially void equipment warranties and could lead to additional consequential damage.

On the advice of its Industry technical Council, the ATA recommends against the use of hydrocarbon refrigerants without the approval the Original Equipment Manufacturers (OEM) supplier.

Follow-up actions:

Maintain the original equipment manufacturers approved refrigerant.

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