

New Concerns and Lack of Data Introduce Unknown Safety Risks as California Court Considers Hasty Transition to Unleaded Avgas

Washington, DC, March 3, 2025 – NATA (the National Air Transportation Association) reiterated its opposition to a forced, premature transition to an unleaded avgas product in California, further supported by recent public notices filed by Original Equipment Manufacturers (OEMs) expressing concerns about potential materials compatibility issues and a lack of transparent data associated with the new fuel.

“Transitioning to a new aviation fuel that lacks transparent data and has not undergone an independent peer reviewed industry consensus process introduces unknown numbers of new risks into the aviation system at a time when the entire industry has reaffirmed its commitment to safety,” said NATA CEO and President Curt Castagna, who also serves as Industry Co-Chair of the Eliminate Aviation Gasoline Lead Emissions (EAGLE) Initiative.

The OEM notices come ahead of a March 5, 2025, hearing to decide on a motion brought by the California Center for Environmental Health (CEH) that would arbitrarily force several of NATA’s member businesses to prematurely transition away from current aviation gasoline in favor of a single unleaded aviation fuel, despite the fuel’s lack of approval for certain categories of general aviation aircraft (e.g., piston-powered helicopters) and its lack of an ASTM International or other peer-reviewed industry consensus standard. The ASTM International process evaluates compatibility with materials throughout the supply chain upstream of the aircraft, including those used in hoses, filters, gaskets, and other wetted components in railcars, transport trucks, fuel farms, mobile refuelers, and other dispensing equipment.

“Fuel distributors, Fixed Base Operators (FBOs), and airports require reliable, transparent data from across the supply chain to thoroughly understand the composition, properties, and materials compatibility of emerging fuels. Recent questions, concerns, and reports on potential materials incompatibility of the CEH-specified new fuel in the California marketplace, as well as the lack of approval and endorsement by multiple aircraft and engine manufacturers, cannot be ignored while the industry still seeks data to assist in the transition to a new fuel,” stated Castagna.

[Cirrus Aircraft](#), [Lycoming](#), [Piper Aircraft](#), and [Textron](#) have issued notices that they do not currently approve the use of the unleaded avgas at the center of CEH’s motion in their aircraft and engines, citing specific concerns about materials compatibility and lack of transparent, peer-reviewed, collaborative testing and data. In addition, six major aircraft manufacturers have submitted information to the Court asserting they do not approve of or support use of the new unleaded fuel in their models. Three manufacturers of piston-powered helicopters also submitted declarations attesting that CEH’s motion effectively seeks to ground these aircraft because the Federal Aviation Administration has not approved the unleaded avgas at issue for use in piston-powered helicopters.

The OEM notices and filings follow public Court filings by individual aircraft owners and pilots, who documented adverse effects on their aircraft potentially related to use of the new unleaded fuel in California. Castagna also submitted a declaration to the Court in support of defendants' opposition to CEH's motion, in which he shared NATA's position that any unleaded avgas cannot be offered as a standalone fuel without an industry consensus standard, such as ASTM International.

"NATA remains steadfast in our commitment to a lead-free future for general aviation. We will continue to work with our industry partners on a path forward that considers perspectives and information from all aviation and community stakeholders. Together, we will achieve our shared goal with efficiency without sacrificing safety," added Castagna.