

The Official Red Dye / Offroad [Diesel](#) FAQ

With fuel prices once again skyrocketing a question we are seeing pop up in many forums here is "Can I run red dye fuel in my [truck](#)"?

Many here have probably noticed the "Dyed Diesel" or "Offroad [Diesel](#)" pumps at some fuel stations or [truck](#) stops. The temptation is there to fuel up your pickup with the cheap fuel from these pumps.

However, are you aware of the ramifications? If the answer to this question is not entirely clear to you, continue reading. This is a several part question, requiring several answers.

"Can I burn red dyed [diesel](#) in my pickup truck without hurting it?"

Generally, the answer is yes. Typically "Red Dye" [diesel](#) is nothing more than regular USLD with a red dye added. Contrary to many old tales of the dye causing problems with engines, it's nothing more than myth - your engine couldn't care less if the fuel was dyed pink or purple, it'll still burn it.

In years passed (since the introduction of ULSD) reportedly SOME red-dye diesel was actually still LSD (Low Sulphur Diesel), not USLD (Ultra Low Sulphur Diesel). Trying to utilize LSD in newer trucks that specially require ULSD to run properly could present problems and possibly damage emissions equipment.

That said, since 2007 most diesel pumped at any station in the USA or Canada is ULSD, regardless if it's on-road (clear) diesel, or off-road (dyed) diesel. By December 1, 2010, all highway diesel fuel was mandated by law to be ULSD. Non-road diesel fuel was required to move to 500 ppm sulfur in 2007, and further to ULSD in 2010.

So, LSD is all but unheard of now, so red-dye or not, there's a virtually 100% chance that you are getting ULSD, and your [engine](#) will be just fine with it.

So.....

"Why is red dye diesel so much less expensive than regular diesel?"

Because red-dye diesel is designed exclusively for non-taxed off-road or commercial equipment (such as a lawn tractor, bobcat, or generator) usage. The normal taxes that are [part](#) of "regular" diesel are excluded on dyed "off road" diesel fuel, hence the lower cost.

What is "Off road" mean?

If you have a diesel generator you are not obligated to pay road-taxes on the fuel it burns, so you burn red-dye diesel. If you have a tractor on a farm that is used exclusively for off-road use, again, you are fine using red-dye diesel. If you have an UNLICENSED pickup [truck](#) that is used solely for off-road use, then you can even run red dyed diesel in the pickup [truck](#) and be entirely legal.

"Ok, but I have a LICENCED pickup truck, why can't I burn red-dye diesel?"

Simple answer - because red dye diesel does not have road-taxes as [part](#) of its cost, using it on-road is considered *tax evasion*. For most here, those two words are enough to strike fear into your hearts, and the decision becomes clear - DON'T RISK IT.

Don't think you will ever get caught? Sure, your luck may last years, but the government (and the people that enforce the laws on behalf of the government) aren't stupid - the red-dye [pumps](#) are watched, and random vehicle inspections are not unheard of. To the contrary, with more and more people taking the risk of burning red-dye on road, they are becoming quite frequent in many areas.

Get caught and the fines typically start at about \$1000. For example, here in Ontario (Canada) the law reads as follows:

Quote:

Anyone committing an offence relating to the improper use of coloured fuel/dyed diesel in Ontario is liable to a fine on first offence of \$440.

Fines of up to \$1,000,000 and/or imprisonment for up to two years are possible for other offences under the Fuel Tax Act, such as tampering with coloured fuel or seals and labels.

Offenders will also be audited and may be assessed tax, penalties and interest. Assessed penalties for the

improper use of dyed diesel or tampering with coloured fuel may be as severe as 13 times the tax. Keep all your fuel receipts.

Picking a random US state (Montana), here's the law:

Quote:

Using untaxed fuel (dyed diesel) in a licensed vehicle violates Montana's law and reduces the money available to build and maintain Montana state highways.

The penalties for using dyed fuel on public roads in Montana are:

1st offense
up to \$1,000.00 - Civil Penalty

2nd offense
up to \$5,000.00 - Civil Penalty

3rd and subsequent offense
Criminal Penalty - minimum fine \$535.00 - maximum \$1,000.00 or by imprisonment for not less than 30 days or more than 6 months, or both

Most laws are very similar with the financial penalties being higher in some, and lower in others, but in all situations it's considered a serious offence and can open a huge legal can of worms, aside from the fine itself.

Ask yourself if it's worth saving a few dollars per tank for the worry of being caught and penalized.

"I'm going to use my pickup [truck](#) off-road exclusively for a month for work, but then put it back on road - can I use dyed diesel for that one month?"

In almost all jurisdictions the law uses the word "Licensed" to either allow or disallow off-road (dyed) fuel use. If, during that one month (or however long it may be) you COMPLETELY remove all licensing from the pickup truck then, technically, yes, you can use dyed fuel in your pickup truck.

Just yanking off your license plates doesn't count, either - you will have to visit your local DMV and remove all traces of the vehicle being licensed whatsoever.

However, at the conclusion of that time period, when you re-license the truck you will have to return to regular on-road (clear) diesel, and it would be very wise to ensure ALL traces of red-dye fuel is removed from the fuel [system](#). Even a few gallons of red-dyed diesel can contaminate a tank full of clear diesel, and the law doesn't care how faint the dye is, if it's there, you're screwed.

Basically, you'd have to [switch](#) back to clear diesel at least 4 to 5 FULL tank fulls of fuel before you plan on placing the truck back to on-road [service](#) again in order to fully flush the fuel tank and fuel system of all the red dye, at which point you would be legal to re-license your truck and place it back in "on road" service again.

Ultimately, if all this hassle is worth the effort and time is up to you. If you are talking a LOT of off-road mileage over a long period of time (6 months or more) then it may be worthwhile, but for a month or two, it's unlikely to be financially beneficial.

"Does the dye leave permanent traces in my fuel [system](#), dying metal [parts](#) and leaving telltale signals that can't be removed?"

Again, this is mostly unfounded rumor. The dye does not "sink into" metals and leave any permanent traces behind once flushed out with clear diesel. The only exception may be [fuel filters](#) where the red dye can stain the filter elements and leave traces of red-dye usage, but a simple [filter](#) change will remedy any concerns there.

"So, how would they ever know? Once the fuel is in my tank they can't see it!"

Roadside enforcement of diesel fuel typically involves the officer taking a "dip" of your tank. They will lower a device down the filler neck and remove a sample of the fuel that's actually in your tank to check for dye. It's quick, and very effective.

"Can't I just refuse a roadside fuel test if I get pulled over?"

Sure, but many jurisdictions consider a refusal to test as a dire offence, sometimes equaling the worst-case-scenario fine that would otherwise result from *several* failed tests. You'll receive a significant fine and possibly even a summons to appear in court and explain yourself. In some areas your vehicle could be seized. Even if you decide

to eat the costs and hassle of this, you'll find yourself on a very short list of people for future monitoring by law enforcement, so you're only inviting future problems.

"I have a large tank in my bed for fueling my equipment in the field - Bobcats, [Generators](#), etc. I have red dye in there - is that OK?"

Sure, as long as none of it ever finds its way into the tank of your pickup truck itself, then it's no problem. Take note, however, that [trucks](#) with large transfer tanks on them are prime suspects to be pulled over by law enforcement for dye checks as the law knows that the temptation to pump some of that "cheap" diesel into your own truck is strong!

"I have a second tank with dyed diesel in it that's secretly plumbed into my trucks fuel system...they'll never figure it out!"

Yeah, they will. Law enforcement has seen ALL the tricks. Trying to secretly plumb in a second tank containing red dye so that you can flip a transfer switch and start burning red dye (while still containing clear diesel in your primary tank) is a neat trick, but it won't work - they're wise to these sorts of tactics and if the enforcement officers WILL look for secret plumbing and sneaky hookups.

.....so, with this information in hand, make your own decisions.

If tempting fate is worth it to you to save a few bucks at every fill up for your licensed on-road pickup truck, you have the information you now seek to make your own decisions.

If you have a legitimate and legal use for wanting to burn red-dyed diesel in your pickup truck, you can feel safe doing so.

If you didn't realize you could burn red-dyed diesel in your legitimate off road equipment like [tractors](#), bobcats, generators, and the such...well, you've saved yourself some money!

The staff, ownership, and operators of [Dieselplace.com](#) in no way condone the illegal use of (untaxed) red-dye diesel for on-road (taxed) usage. Do so at your own peril and risk.

This FAQ will be updated as information comes to [light](#) that may be important to its content. Please feel free to follow-up with a response if warranted.

Thanks
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