Bad Fuel Response Guide

A practical first-response guide for consumers, fleets and businesses dealing with suspected contaminated, adulterated or off-specification fuel.

PURPOSE Help you protect people and equipment, record the transaction, preserve useful evidence and decide whether testing, verification or reporting is appropriate.

Important: Vehicle symptoms or unusual fuel characteristics do not by themselves prove adulteration or misconduct. Avoid public accusations until the facts are properly assessed.

1. Protect people and equipment

- [ ] Stop using the vehicle, generator or equipment if continued operation may be unsafe or cause further damage.
- [ ] Do not open fuel systems, drain tanks or collect samples without appropriate competence and safety controls.
- [ ] If there is a fire, major spill or immediate danger, use the appropriate emergency channel first.

2. Record the purchase or delivery

Consumer / retail purchase

- [ ] Service station and location
- [ ] Date and time
- [ ] Pump number and grade
- [ ] Receipt / transaction reference

Bulk / fleet delivery

- [ ] Supplier and legal entity
- [ ] Delivery note and invoice
- [ ] Tanker / trailer registration
- [ ] Product and quantity delivered

3. Record the symptoms and chronology

- [ ] Record when symptoms first appeared and the mileage / engine hours at the time.
- [ ] Record warning lights, smoke, starting problems, power loss, filter blockage or other observed symptoms.
- [ ] Preserve maintenance records and obtain a written technician assessment where appropriate.
- [ ] Photograph relevant components, receipts and visible fuel conditions only where safe and lawful.

4. Preserve evidence before repairs or disposal

- [ ] Keep receipts, invoices, payment records, delivery notes and communications.
- [ ] Ask the workshop or fleet team to retain replaced filters or relevant parts where practical and lawful.
- [ ] Preserve any existing fuel sample under documented control; do not create unsafe samples.
- [ ] Keep original photos and documents unchanged.

PRINTABLE CHECKLIST

Bad fuel response checklist

Use this checklist before deciding whether the issue requires laboratory testing, supplier verification, an insurance process or a secure Report Fuel submission.

5. Testing and technical assessment

- [ ] Use representative sampling and an appropriately competent laboratory where testing is justified.
- [ ] Record the sampling method, sample point, container, seal, date/time and people involved.
- [ ] Provide the laboratory with the correct product type and relevant test scope.
- [ ] Interpret results with the transaction history, vehicle condition and supply-chain information.

6. Review the supplier and transaction

- [ ] Confirm the legal entity that supplied or invoiced the product.
- [ ] Review relevant licence information and whether it matches the activity represented.
- [ ] Record the source, depot, delivery route and tanker information where available.
- [ ] Use independent verification where a commercial or licensing claim needs to be confirmed.

7. When a Report Fuel submission may be appropriate

- [ ] There is evidence suggesting deliberate adulteration, substitution or document manipulation.
- [ ] The supplier or source information cannot be reconciled after reasonable checks.
- [ ] There is a repeated pattern involving multiple deliveries, vehicles or customers.
- [ ] The concern involves suspected illicit trading, licence misrepresentation, theft or related misconduct.

Next steps

Use the online resource

reportfuel.com/bad-fuel-response-guide/

Scan the QR code for the current online version and future updates.

Related: Evidence Preservation Checklist | Fuel Adulteration Guide

Reporting concern? **Use the secure Report Fuel reporting channel**. Do not email incident evidence or secure access codes.

Disclaimer: This resource provides general educational guidance only and does not replace legal, regulatory, technical, laboratory, safety or emergency advice. Information should be assessed in context and verified where appropriate.