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'07 Filters: manufacturers take the bypass

TORONTO, (June 3, 2004) -- Filter manufacturers, like everyone else, are playing a guessing game as they try to anticipate how to meet the needs of the new engines heading our way in 2007.

"You've got to look at the whole system," says John Clevenger, director of global product management at Fleetguard, a supplier of filtration and cooling system products. "The oil and filter work together. The oil holds contaminants in suspension and the filter takes out the contaminants. It's a symbiotic relationship."

Changes in oil chemistry for 2007 may require new filter gasket materials, plastics, adhesives, and perhaps different filter media itself. With the possibility of more soot being suspended in the oil, filtration efficiency and capacity may need to be improved -- perhaps by using more filters on the engine, especially bypass filters.

Chris Greeson, senior technical manager at Wix Filters, says "It's anybody's guess" at this point how many filters a 2007 engine will need, what kinds of oil blends will be used, the pressures and temperatures filters will have to endure, and how much of a problem sludge will be. "There's a ton of R&D going on, and we're trying to prepare ourselves for as many scenarios as we can imagine. Hopefully, we guess right."

One thing filter makers seem sure of is the need for bypass filters. "Because it's a slow flow area, you can use all types of media to do a better job of cleaning the oil of contamination, moisture, and sludge," Greeson says.

If, as some predict, the 2007 oils generate more soot, a bypass filter -- especially the centrifugal type -- will excel at removing it, according to Clevenger. In addition, he says, soot tends to stick to the organic contaminants in oil that form sludge. Sludge tends to plug filters, but bypass filters using depth media can be very good at organic contaminant removal, he says.

Bypass filters also enhance total filter capacity, a key to extending drain intervals, Greeson says. "The bypass filter adds dirt-holding capacity to the oil filtration system, and when you do that, you have a better chance of going back to extended oil drains," Greeson explains. "But I don't think there's hope we'll be back to 50,000 miles or more without the truck leaning to one side because there's 38 filters on it."

