



Ken Newton,
CEO, VASA

Abuse, zeal and exaggeration

There's an adage I picked up from the tourist industry – the day they stop talking about you is the day to start worrying.

You would expect, though, that the talking would be, at worst, 51% complimentary. Not like the talk recently overheard at one of Australia's biggest auto aftermarket expositions in Sydney.

AVASA spy (he didn't know he was a spy until I started asking him questions) was browsing around a display stand of A/C and electrical gear from one of the country's biggest parts wholesalers, when he heard 'VASA' being spoken of in terms far below the 51% complimentary.

Our spy cocked an ear, eager to get the low-down on a bit of VASA scandal. The sales type was in top gear, letting it be known to anyone within ear-shot that VASA was an organisation of idiots who didn't have an environmental bone in their bodies, and was totally funded by DuPont, Honeywell, Arkema and anybody else who makes fluorocarbon refrigerant of the ilk of R-134a.

The person with the big mouth, pouring forth unsubstantiated garbage at speed, was flogging Hy-Chill, a highly flammable hydrocarbon refrigerant which car makers around the world have avowed should never be used in their cars.

VASA, according to Mr. Big Mouth, was the thorn in the side of this potentially huge, very environmentally friendly industry. VASA, he said, had a vested interest in promoting chemical refrigerants because it was being funded by the companies at the big end of town. A string of supporting lies followed this statement, as he handed out a very impressive brochure promoting the virtues of using flammable refrigerant in systems which are not designed for it.

I suppose we should be proud of the fact that VASA is labelled by the hydrocarbon sales force as being the organisation which stands between them and fame and fortune.

What is more concerning is that the sales tactics seen in action in a very public place at a major exhibition in Sydney have become typical of the hydrocarbon campaign.

Luckily, there are always enough VASA people or other professional workshops around who are prepared to challenge their sales pitch, but the response is always the same – abuse fired by fanatical zeal.

On those occasions when the hydrocarbon lobbyists have been game enough to be in the same room as professional industry repairers, logical discussion of the pros and cons of refrigerants becomes impossible.

The hydrocarbon industry is adept at exaggerating the level of acceptance of their product. When challenged, they revert to their tired claims of conspiracy by the chemical manufacturers and that organisations like VASA are beholden to them via some fictitious sponsorship connection.

They probably have never forgotten the day they lost face at the world forum on automotive air conditioning and refrigerant held in Brussels a few years back. Then VASA President Mark Mitchell was

sent there representing the Australian industry by the Federal Government.

At the forum, all refrigerant makers were allowed their five minutes of fame, and the hydrocarbon people were there, of course. In their presentation they referred to automotive air conditioning systems which had already been designed to take hydrocarbon refrigerant.

Mark stood up and challenged the statement, remarking that if this were true it was a great breakthrough in technology, and the automotive world should know more about it and see it in action.

You know the rest. The delegate was forced to withdraw the statement to his utter embarrassment.

No wonder that in the latest reports from the summits on new refrigerants, not one car maker in the world is considering turning to hydrocarbon. They remain unconvinced that the safety issues can be overcome.

The hydrocarbon people should stick to burning steaks on the barbecue. ❄

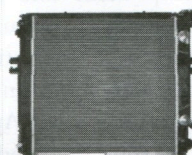
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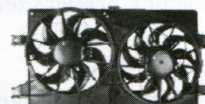
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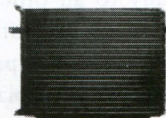
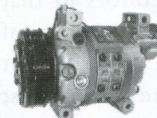
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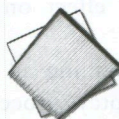


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ACTION • June 2009

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