

ecoNews — Wire —

IOWA DEPARTMENT OF NATURAL RESOURCES

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For immediate release

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MAKING MANURE APPLICATION SAFE – FOR PEOPLE AND THE ENVIRONMENT

SPENCER – ‘Check the weather,’ is the watchword of the DNR for spring manure applicators.

“You can reduce the risk of run-off, either through tile lines or on the surface, by simply checking the weather forecast before you apply,” said Jen Christian, an environmental specialist at the Spencer DNR field office.

If heavy rains are in the forecast, don’t try to beat them into the field, because that three- or four-inch rain could backfire, causing run-off that could result in a fish kill or water quality violation, she added.

Christian also cautions against working too long or getting in a hurry – which frequently happens as applicators try to get manure applied before spring crops are planted. Most accidents occur either late at night because applicators are working long hours and are exhausted, or when drivers get in a hurry and take a corner too fast, ending up in the ditch.

If a manure release does occur, manure applicators are required to report it to the DNR within six hours of when it occurred or was discovered. The spill line is available 24 hours a day at 515-281-8694. “The faster you call, the better,” said Christian. “Because DNR employees have worked with so many spills, often we can help prevent serious environmental problems if we get involved early in the process.”

Manure applicators can also make it easier for the DNR by carrying their applicator certification cards. Commercial applicators are reminded that tanks traveling on public roads need to be labeled with three-inch high letters.

For more information, contact Jennifer Christian or Jeff Prier, at the Spencer DNR field office, 712-262-4177.

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DIESEL / ELECTRIC HYBRID BUS TO VISIT DES MOINES

DES MOINES — The same type of diesel-electric hybrid bus used in New York City to save fuel and cut air emissions will be driving the streets of Des Moines April 26 - 27. The bus is in town to shuttle energy experts on a tour of some of central Iowa's most energy efficient buildings.

The bus, made by Orion Bus Industries, is propelled with a single electric motor that is powered by a diesel-driven generator and an energy storage unit. According to the manufacturer, the bus can cut fuel use 30 percent, greenhouse gasses by 30 percent, and particles that cause smog by 90 percent. It also accelerates more quickly, quietly and smoothly than a conventional city bus.

Brian Button, spokesman for the Iowa DNR, says that hybrid technology is catching on across the United States. "Rising fuel prices and concerns about air quality are motivating the public to consider hybrids," Button said. "Sport utility vehicles, pickups, and even school buses and city buses are becoming available in hybrid models," he said. Button added that diesel hybrids can also use soydiesel, which further reduces harmful soot emissions and is a renewable fuel.

The public is invited to see the bus and ask questions of the manufacturer's representative on Wednesday, April 27 from 1:30 - 4 p.m. just west of the State Capitol on Finkbine Drive.

The bus was provided by the manufacturer with assistance from Des Moines Metropolitan Transit Authority.

MEDIA OPPORTUNITY: There will be a media opportunity to see and board the bus, speak with a representative from Orion Bus Industries, and learn more about hybrid technology and bio-diesel fuels on Tuesday, April 26 from 8:00 - 9:00 a.m. on Finkbine Street, west of the State Capitol.

For more information, contact Brian Button, Iowa Department of Natural Resources, at (515) 281-7832 or brian.button@dnr.state.ia.us.

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SAFETY IS KEY DURING SPRING CHEMICAL APPLICATION

DES MOINES – The DNR urges producers and chemical applicators to slow down and stay safe during spring fertilizer and chemical application.

“Good handling and storage practices, along with safe driving are keys to avoiding a chemical release during spring application,” said Kathy Lee, environmental specialist with the DNR’s emergency response unit.

Spills are most likely to occur when people get in a hurry and take a corner too fast, she said.

Lee added that folks should check their application equipment, too, to make sure that hoses, fittings and tanks are in good condition.

If a fertilizer or pesticide release does occur, it must be reported to the DNR and the local law enforcement authority as soon as possible, but not later than six hours. The spill line is available 24 hours a day at 515-281-8694.

For more information about spill response, contact the DNR’s Emergency Response unit at (515) 281-8694.