E15 gasoline clears one more roadblock

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E15 gasoline can now be sold at a pump near you, the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency declared on Friday. The EPA cleared a fuel blend containing 15 percent ethanol for sale at gas stations, but restrictions at the state and local level mean widespread sales are unlikely any time soon, reports the Des Moines Register.

Until now, U.S. companies were not allowed to sell a fuel that contained more than 10 percent ethanol for use in most conventional gasoline-powered vehicles. Most gasoline sold in the United States contains the blend of 90 percent gasoline and 10 percent ethanol.

The EPA, which approved the new blend in January 2011, had to first complete a series of steps before E15 could go on sale to prevent misfueling and ensure that the fuel is properly marked and sold. The blend has been approved for use in cars and light trucks from the 2001 model year onward, but it is banned from older vehicles and light equipment.

The industry thought this step had been taken back in April, when Ethanol Producer’s Magazine predicted sales would begin as early as May 1. Even now that the EPA has officially approved some companies to sell E15, the industry still has obstacles ahead.

The EPA said while some companies may introduce E15 into the marketplace, some federal, state and local requirements, along with other issues, must still be addressed. For example, dispenser and tank compatibility with E15 must be considered by marketers of the fuel. In addition, because several states restrict the sale of some gasoline-ethanol blends, law changes might be needed before E15 can be sold in those states.

E15 has cleared one hurdle, but there are more speed bumps ahead on the road to your neighborhood gas station.