

Press Release

Saxony's first biomethane refuelling station in Grimma

VNG-Erdgastankstellen GmbH and Aral AG open new refuelling station

Grimma/Leipzig, December 8, 2009. Drivers in Grimma have already been able to refuel their vehicles with an alternative automotive fuel, namely natural gas, for the past three weeks – and from today, the new refuelling station is officially open for business. Dr. Gerhard Gey, Leipzig County Commissioner, Dr. Sabine Krahnert, Second Deputy Mayor of Grimma, and Hagen Kuschel, Managing Director of VNG-Erdgastankstellen GmbH (VNG-T, a company in the VNG Group), inaugurated the new CNG refuelling station on Hengstbergstrasse. The partner of the 30th CNG refuelling station in Saxony is Aral AG. “What’s special about Grimma is that the CNG is mixed with ten percent biomethane,” Hagen Kuschel explained. “This is Saxony’s first CNG refuelling station to offer such a mixture.” Handball players Henrike Schuderer and Maike Brückmann from HC Leipzig were the first to officially fill their CNG-powered VW Tourans at the station.

Expanding refuelling station infrastructure

VNG-T has invested 300,000 euros in the new facilities in Grimma. “Proximity to the federal highway was an important factor for choosing this location, and we have thus added another CNG refuelling station along the transit route between Leipzig and Dresden,” Hagen Kuschel commented. “Our customers are commuters and travellers as well as local clients.” VNG-T has invested a total of 4.2 million euros since 2008 in building 16 new natural gas refuelling stations in eastern Germany with a view to reinforcing this network. Other stations to have already opened include Bautzen and Dresden (Saxony), Leuna and Halle (Saxony-Anhalt), Birkenwerder (Brandenburg) and Ribnitz-Damgarten (Mecklenburg-Western Pomerania). Some 85,000 natural-gas vehicles (NGVs) registered in Germany have access to more than 850 CNG refuelling stations.

Proven partnership

While VNG-T is investing in natural gas refuelling technology and the product itself, Aral is contributing its brand and its modern refuelling facilities. “Aral and its parent company BP wish to support the natural gas industry in its efforts to expand the refuelling station infrastructure for NGVs in Germany and are making their own filling station sites available for these investments by gas companies,” Steffi Cämmerer, regional director of Aral AG, explained. “Grimma is the 184th CNG refuelling station in Germany operated under the Aral brand.”



Invitation to test drives

To celebrate the opening, VNG-T is inviting people to test drive NGVs on the OBI DIY car park opposite the new biomethane refuelling station between 9 a.m. and 6 p.m. from December 10 -12, 2009. There will be plenty of opportunities to find out more about natural gas and biomethane as automotive fuels, and there will also be the chance to test drive NGVs. Four cars from current model series can be tested free of charge.

Background

Prepared for the future – cost and environmental benefits with natural gas

Natural gas used as an automotive fuel is measured in kilos and costs 0.98 euros per kilo in Grimma. Given the higher energy content, NGV owners save roughly 50 percent compared with a petrol-driven vehicle and approximately 30 percent compared with a diesel vehicle every time they fill up at a CNG refuelling station. The saving compared with LPG is some 20 percent. One kilogram of natural gas contains as much energy as 1.5 litres of premium petrol, 1.3 litres of diesel or 1.9 litres of LPG. Price-wise, this converts into 0.65 euros per litre of premium petrol, 0.75 euros per litre of diesel and 0.50 euros per litre of PLG.

Apart from the price benefits, natural gas is also the most environmentally friendly automotive fuel. It does not emit any soot particles or sulphur. Compared with petrol, CO₂ emissions are lowered by an average 25 percent, while carbon monoxide emissions are cut by up to 75 percent and reactive hydrocarbons by as much as 60 percent. NGVs already comply with the EU's nitrogen oxide emission thresholds which apply from 2010.

By adding biomethane, which has no effect on the performance of the vehicle, CO₂ can be lowered even further. Biomethane is produced from sustainable raw materials such as corn and rye crops. During the combustion process, biomethane only releases the same amount of CO₂ as the plants have absorbed via photosynthesis during cultivation.