Louis Wagner, operator, at left, and Harold Stegall, project engineer, at right, discuss work underway on Exxon's Baton Rouge refinery's methyl tertiary-butyl ether facility, pictured behind them. MTBE is a high-octane blending component used to make cleaner-burning gasoline.

**Fuel plants' Clean Air Act compliance means jobs**

By BOB ANDERSON
Environmental editor

Federal requirements for cleaner fuels are resulting in hundreds of jobs for Baton Rouge area construction workers as refineries build large units to blend cleaner-burning gasoline and remove sulfur from diesel fuel.

Fuel plants' Clean Air Act compliance includes build new units, such as Exxon's Baton Rouge refinery's methyl tertiary-butyl ether facility, pictured behind them. MTBE is a high-octane blending component used to make cleaner-burning gasoline.

**The Clean Air Act calls for cleaner-burning diesel fuel next year and eventually other fuel changes to help improve air quality.**

The Clean Air Act calls for cleaner-burning diesel fuel next year and eventually other fuel changes to help improve air quality. Exxon has begun land clearing to build a $25 million unit to reduce sulfur content in diesel fuel for marine use to meet another fuel demand of the Clean Air Act. Exxon officials said they are not yet sure how many construction jobs and permanent positions will result from the new diesel unit. Across the Mississippi River from Exxon, Placid Refining is planning to invest $36 million in two construction projects to make cleaner-burning gasoline and diesel fuel.

**Clean air**

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challenge Placid is meeting by undertaking these sizable investments," Deby said.

At its refinery in Convent, Star Enterprise is spending more than $77 million on a pair of projects to produce cleaner-burning fuels required by the act.

Together the two construction projects will create 350 construction jobs and 18 permanent positions, according to the company.

One of the projects, costing $22 million, is for a 2,500 barrel-per-day methyl tert butyl ether, or MTBE, unit and a 3,000 barrel per day tertiary amyl methyl ether, or TAME, unit.

MTBE and TAME are both ether-based oxygenates that can be blended with gasoline to create a cleaner-burning fuel that will help reduce carbon monoxide in cities where it poses a problem — particularly in the northeastern part of the nation.

Added oxygenates in gasoline can also help to reduce smog (low level ozone pollution), which is more common in warmer climates and has proven a particular problem in Baton Rouge.

The other Star project is a $45 million hydrotreating unit to reduce sulfur in fuel for diesel-burning vehicles.

The plant will also have a $10 million unit to produce lower sulfur diesel and a $2.5 million project to produce gasoline with lower vapor pressure, which reduces hydrocarbon emissions from automobiles.

**Marathon**

Marathon is "maximizing uses of Louisiana suppliers" and construction companies on the projects, which will provide about 400 construction jobs at the project's peak later this summer, said Mike Dixon of Marathon.

Marathon has another plant on the drawing board to produce fuels demanded by the Clean Air Act, but no information is available yet on the cost of that project, Dixon said.

Shell Oil Co. has announced plans to construct a MTBE plant at Norco — one of three to be built in the nation by Shell. The company said there may be additional construction at Norco to produce clean-burning fuels.

"Additional investments to enhance our competitive position by upgrading our clean fuels manufacturing capabilities will be announced in the future," said Steven L. Miller, president of Shell Refining and Marketing Co.

Construction will begin on the MTBE unit later this year, according to officials at the Norco plant.

In addition to the MTBE unit, which will start up in 1993, Shell is doing some other things to meet lower vapor pressure requirements for gasoline, said P.B. Schneble, manager of the Norco plant.

Officials with Mobil Refining Co. in Chalmette said they are in a good position to produce clean-burning fuels but will have some expenditures and will create a few new jobs as a result of the demands of the Clean Air Act. They said they had no specific figures available, however.

 Likewise, officials with BP Oil Co. in Belle Chase and Atlas Processing Co. in Shreveport said they are working on projects to produce cleaner-burning fuels, but said they had no details on expenditures or jobs that would be created.

Conoco recently completed a $14 million project giving the refinery the ability to produce low-vapor-pressure gasoline, said spokesman Liltie Jacobson.

She said the refinery will have further projects "toughing through 1994-95.

Much of an $860 million capital spending program at CITGO Petroleum Corp. in Lake Charles is related to the Clean Air Act, said Bob Davidson of CITGO.

However, those projects include not just production of cleaner-burning fuels but activities to reduce the plant's own emissions, said CITGO officials.

Other plants are doing construction on their sites to reduce their own emissions, as required by the Clean Air Act, but those that provided specific information on jobs and capital expenditures did not include those numbers with those provided for production of cleaner-burning fuels.