

Clean and efficient

At OEC, onboard technologies are helping lower costs and provide environmentally friendly solutions during on-site operations

Oakville Enterprises Corp. (OEC) relies heavily on its fleet throughout its large portfolio of operations. Wholly owned by the Municipality of the Town of Oakville, Ontario, OEC provides products and services in four strategic lines of business—electricity distribution, infrastructure services, energy services and generation—to residential and commercial customers in Ontario and throughout Canada.

"With our wide ranging operations in different geographic areas comes an ongoing need to operate in a manner as environmentally friendly as possible," says Ernie Liersch, asset service manager at OEC, "and it is very important to do so cost effectively and efficiently. No one likes to have trucks and other vehicles idling on job sites, especially in residential areas."

Many of OEC's business operations require power to be available in a vehicle at all times, Liersch relates. "We have a wide range of fleet vehicles, from dump trucks and aerial equipment, on construction and repair projects, and SUVs and sedans for utility locate services," he explains. "At a site, these units need to run to power tools and equipment, safety lights, computers and printers, and to keep the cab warm in winter."

To solve that challenge, OEC has turned to technology, specifically the latest inverter solutions from Xantrex, and in some vehicles a gasoline-fired auxiliary heater from Webasto. On site, those technologies provide heat and power without idling the engine and without draining the starting batteries.

"Previously," Liersch says, "our

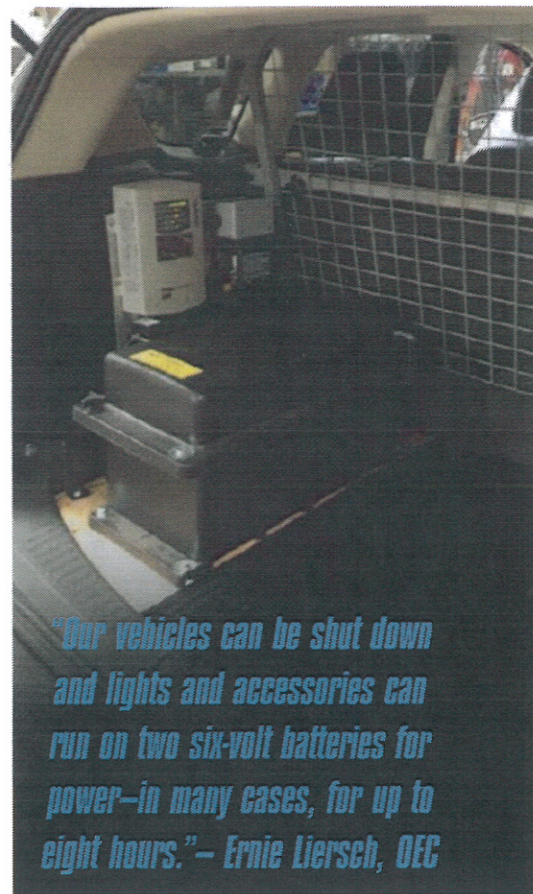
vehicles were idling to power mandatory safety lights and to keep cabs warm in the winter and to run computers and printers. We switched to a cigarette lighter-type inverter for power but they still used the vehicle batteries, which then had to be recharged by running the engine.

"In the past 14 months," Liersch continues, "we've had WE Enterprises install Xantrex PROwatt SW2000 inverters and Xantrex TRUECharge2 20A battery chargers in more than 400 vehicles. Now, our vehicles can be shut down and lights and accessories can run on two six-volt batteries for power—in many cases, for up to eight hours. When the vehicles are not in use, the batteries are recharged using shore power."

Xantrex PROwatt SW Sine Wave Inverters feature high surge capability and provide current for electrical loads. In addition to dual GFCI AC receptacles, the PROwatt SW Series includes a USB connection for providing power to most chargeable devices. The inverter also has an automatic ignition lockout, shutting down its output when the vehicle's ignition is not turned on, and can be hardwired so AC power is available in vehicle receptacles.

Xantrex TRUECharge2 Battery Chargers are available in 20-, 40- and 60-amp 12-volt models. The units have settings for flooded, gel, AGM or lead-calcium batteries, temperature-compensated charging, and a battery equalization feature. Designed for two- and three-stage charging, the chargers ensure batteries receive an optimum charge by regulating the voltage and current delivered in three automatic stages.

In addition to reducing charge



"Our vehicles can be shut down and lights and accessories can run on two six-volt batteries for power—in many cases, for up to eight hours."—Ernie Liersch, OEC

and discharge cycles that wear starting batteries, OEC vehicles with inverters are using less fuel by not idling. Employing Webasto gasoline heaters for cab heat is also reducing fuel use. Using the same technology found in the company's diesel-fired units, Liersch explains, compared to running the engine the heaters operate on a very small percentage of fuel from the vehicle tank.

"That also means there's less wear and tear on engines and our maintenance costs are lower because we set some of our service intervals based on engine hours," Liersch says. "Our cost data proves that, and in addition to the direct savings we're reducing our carbon footprint and more easily complying with anti-idle laws that are in place in most Ontario cities."

Using technology to help ensure its fleet is environmentally friendly at on-site operations, OEC is also saving fuel, wear and tear, and lowering its maintenance and operating costs in the process. ▀

