

Hybrid Vehicles Makes a Turn for the More Powerful Vehicles in the Auto Industry:

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By Jenny McLane

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It is common knowledge among car enthusiasts and car owners that the bigger the vehicle, the bigger the amount of fuel it consumes. With this in mind, several automobile producers have begun diverting a big chunk of their efforts to producing more hybrid 4x4s in the year 2005.

Taking on the Fleet First. The big three – Ford, Dodge and General Motors have seemed to agree that 2005 is the perfect opportunity to introduce the hybrid versions of some very popular vehicles.

Ford Introduces the Ford Escape Hybrid, the first vehicle to combine SUV capability with the outstanding fuel economy and low environmental impact of a full hybrid. "Full" hybrid means it automatically switches between pure electric power, pure gasoline or diesel engine power or a combined operation to optimize efficiency and performance. The no frills Escape Hybrid drives normally, performs superbly and offers all the features you'd expect from the SUV leader. The Hybrid Ford Escape features lots of room, comfortable seating for five, an adaptable cargo area, 1000-pound towing capacity, and an optional Intelligent 4WD System which produces the same all-weather grip and off-road competence available in conventional Escape models.

Full hybrids can achieve 50% or more improvement in fuel economy during traffic induced stop-and-go type of driving, wherein the electric motor is most efficient. The Escape Hybrid delivers more than 75% fuel economy improvement in city driving when weighed against a conventional V-6 powered Escape XLT. The Escape Hybrid can travel more than 400 miles in city driving on a single tank of gasoline. Ford has already manufactured and sold the 4,000 units Ford Escape Hybrid in 2004 and its resounding success has prompted it to build a "modest" 20,000 more for 2005. Ford wants to make sure it is not just a fad and people would see the practical, economical and environmental impact a Hybrid vehicle can induce. The Escape Hybrid costs \$3,300 more than the V-6 powered Escape.

Dodge and General Motors follow suit. Ford has been the first to produce and set the bar in the large vehicle Hybrid market segment and Dodge and GM cannot afford to lag behind. General Motors and Dodge are not that far behind though. In the last quarter of 2004, General Motors introduced electric

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hybrid versions of its 2005 Chevrolet Silverado and GMC Sierra pickups. The trucks were only available to those who are in Florida, California, Nevada, Alaska, Oregon, and Washington. GM expects to produce about 2,500 units in 2005 – 1,875 Silverados and 625 Sierras – with the hopes of launching the vehicles on a national scale by 2006. Dodge manufactured only 100 diesel–electric 2005 RAM pickups, targeted for utility company fleets. The diesel will produce better fuel economy, with an additional 15% mpg boost over the conventional diesel Ram coming from the electric side. Diesels are generally considered more "environmentally disastrous" on the ecological front. The Dodge Ram Diesel Hybrid is expected to sell for around \$40,000 a somewhat larger cost than the non–hybrid models.

Heftier Price Tags. Although the price tags may vary from state to state, the average increase for the cost for a Hybrid option may run well up to \$3,000. The GM versions of the Hybrid engine are soft–hybrids, which mean that an electric motor provides a boost up on accelerations. The GM version of a hybrid large vehicle has a stop–start system that turns off the gasoline engine at traffic lights. It

possesses a 120–volt, 2,400–watt generator system that can provide power for electrical equipments. The Silverado and Sierra hybrids also serves as power generators, with two conventional, three–prong plug–ins that can be found under the rear seat, two extra plug–ins can also be found in the rear bed of the trucks. The four 120–volt, 20 amp electrical supplementary power outlets can supply power for electric coolers, electric ranges, sound systems video consoles and other electrical equipments that can be lugged around. The power supply can be utilized while the engine is running or even after the engine is cut and the keys are taken out of the ignition. Ground fault detection systems are installed in the power supply circuits so that overloads and short circuits can be prevented. According to General Motors, the new hybrid pickups could sustain enough power to last for up to 32 hours non–stop before needing to fill the tank again. This function new feature proved to be very useful when GM loaned some of their new Hybrids' to hurricane stricken Florida when they were used for some relief operations, they were vital in some areas where electricity was incapacitated. The hybrid models of the Chevy Silverado and GMC Sierra trucks are foreseen to develop fuel savings of up to 10% over analogous trucks without the hybrid benefit.

How exactly do Hybrids get such Fantastic Mileage?

HV's (Hybrid Vehicles) are principally powered by an internal combustion engine, much like any ordinary vehicles. However, they also transform the energy that is normally wasted during stop and go operations into electricity, which is stored in a battery until the moment it is needed by the electric motor. The electric motor is utilized to support the engine when accelerating or doing some uphill driving and in low–speed driving operations where internal combustion engines are least efficient. Some Hybrid Vehicles also automatically shut off the engine when the vehicle is idling and restarts the internal combustion engine when the accelerator is depressed. This avoids exhausted fuel when the vehicle is not in motion. Unlike all–electric vehicles, HV's that are being produced today do not need to be plugged into an external source of electricity to be recharged, the energy provided by the engine and the braking force charges the batteries.

Is it worth the fuss and the costs? It all boils down to one thing, Large Hybrid Vehicles cost more than their non–hybrid counterparts. Deciding on the advantages though is not that hard. You get better mileage, companies save on fuel consumption, electric motors are all the rage plus you get to help the environment. Also, the hybrid SUV's pay for themselves in the long run, costs may be cut through tax incentives and decreased fuel consumption help to offset the price difference. Determining the

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cost-savings ratio would be one factor many car manufacturers will keep in mind while keeping close scrutiny in their products. Nevertheless a large hybrid vehicle may just be the thing the future needs.

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Jenny McLane is a 36 year old native of Iowa and has a knack for research on cars and anything and everything about it. She works full time as a Market Analyst for one of the leading car parts suppliers in the country today.

What Are Hybrid Cars?

By Dennis Conner

Hybrid plants like corn or rice are familiar to many but hybrid cars? Are these space-age cars that do not need fuel to run or even fly in the sky?

To the uninitiated, hybrid cars may seem like an alien form or specie that requires a lot of explaining. To car and environment aficionados, hybrid cars are either bane or boon especially with the increasing fuel prices worldwide.

Hybrid cars may just be the answer of modern scientists to the rising fuel cost and the deteriorating quality of the environment. Contrary to your belief, hybrid cars are no longer new to the society as the auto industry has come up with various models of hybrid cars. Car manufacturers who have been left behind in the race for the perfect hybrid car have announced their intention to compete in the market.

Hybrid vehicles are those that possess the dual qualities of being able to run on more than two sources of power like gasoline or battery. The first hybrid vehicles came in the form of hybrid bikes which has fuel features but can be operated using the pedal skills of the rider. Hybrid cars are more common in Europe particularly in Norway and France. Hybrid buses that are operated by overhead and by diesel when they travel in other areas without the overhead wires are also being used in Seattle. There are also hybrid submarines which run on nuclear, diesel or electric energy.

The most common hybrid vehicle is that powered by both gasoline and electricity. A hybrid car attempts to allow the owner to save on fuel while being environment friendly. However, can hybrid cars be efficient enough to provide long distance travel without being refueled or recharged?

Most gasoline-powered vehicles answer this requirement although they cause more damage to the environment because of the emissions. On the other hand, electric vehicles are more environment-friendly but can only go on a maximum of 161 kilometers until it is recharged and the

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recharging time is very slow. The hybrid car combines the advantages of both the gasoline-powered and the electric-powered car.

A hybrid car possesses a gasoline engine much like the ordinary gasoline powered car but the engine is much smaller, more environment-friendly due to lesser emissions and more efficient. It also possesses a very high tech electric motor which allows dual use of batteries and energy.

The hybrid car may just be in its infancy but the human mind can very well make sure that the hybrid cars will be the cars of the future.

The author is a regular contributor to Hybrid Headquarters

where more

hybrid car information is freely available.



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