

Contact: Nick Cappa
Cole Quinnell

DaimlerChrysler More Than Doubles Fleet of Fuel Cell Vehicles in the United States

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DaimlerChrysler announced today that in December 2004 the company will more than double the amount of fuel cell vehicles that it currently manages in the United States - more than any other manufacturer. Adding to what is already the largest fleet of fuel cell automobiles in the world, the recent U.S. arrivals consist of Mercedes F-Cell passenger cars and medium-duty Dodge Fuel Cell Sprinter Vans. The 19 vehicles are currently being prepped for customers in California and Michigan.

"DaimlerChrysler is making good on a promise to have 100 fuel cell vehicles by the end of this year," said Andreas Schell, Senior Manager Fuel Cell Systems Advance Vehicle Engineering, Chrysler Group. "We are anxious to play our part to decrease the nation's dependency on oil and increase air quality."

In the State of the Union address last year, President Bush declared his revolutionary hydrogen fuel plan, which searches for a new day in which America's cars and light trucks are fueled by clean hydrogen-powered fuel cells. President Bush stated, "the first car driven by a child born today could be fueled by hydrogen and pollution free."

Fuel cell technology at DaimlerChrysler has reached a new milestone along the road to market maturity. The delivery of fuel cell vehicles to the United States, Germany, Japan and Singapore customers is an important step in the largest practical fleet testing program for fuel cell vehicles worldwide.

Partnerships are an important part of fuel cell technology development. DaimlerChrysler has the opportunity to share goals with other companies and government entities, such as UPS and the EPA. DaimlerChrysler and BP, partners in the Department of Energy's fuel cell vehicle and infrastructure validation program, recently dedicated the first hydrogen station in the plan. These partnerships and the common goal will propel fuel cell transportation to maturity.

The principle of the fuel cell was discovered in 1839 by the English physicist Sir William Grove. In the fuel cell, a chemical reaction takes place between hydrogen and oxygen, in which electrical energy and heat are released and chemically pure water is produced. The fuel cell has a sandwich-like structure; between two gas-permeable electrodes of graphite paper is an electrolytic plastic foil, the proton exchange membrane (PEM). Since a single cell produces only a very small electrical potential, several cells are connected in series to form a fuel cell stack. The electrical energy generated is used to power the vehicle's electric motor, as well as supplying the peripheral elements of the fuel cell system.

In order to focus expertise and resources, and to press ahead with the development of the fuel cell, DaimlerChrysler has entered into a strategic alliance with Ford Motor Company and the fuel cell specialist Ballard Power Systems. Over the past 10 years, DaimlerChrysler has developed numerous concept vehicles in order to prove out the opportunities presented by this technology.

DaimlerChrysler pioneered fuel cell vehicle technology over 10 years ago. Fuel cells release energy from the reaction of hydrogen with a catalyst and oxygen. This clean technology operates at a high level of efficiency and is true zero emission. Hydrogen-powered fuel cell vehicles emit only pure water vapor as exhaust. Fuel cell vehicles are part of DaimlerChrysler's advanced propulsion technology umbrella, which includes efficient gasoline engines, advanced diesels and hybrid powertrain systems.

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