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Chicago in Top Five for Hybrid Car Sales

Hybrids: For the Environment and the Drivers

By

Hybrid automobiles are cause for celebration with environmentalists and gas-guzzling vehicle owners. According to *Associated Press*, the average car burns about 21 miles per gallon, and those who are skeptical of gas pricing ups and downs are racing to waiting lists for hybrid vehicles, including Chicago.

One gallon of gas weighs approximately six pounds, and with US cars and trucks consuming over 8.2 million barrels of gas per day, the US is breathing in 300 million metric tons of carbon pollution. And if you're a driver who isn't concerned with the environment, you may be interested in knowing that E85 is almost \$0.30 less than the average gas prices.

Chicago is one of those cities that is at the top of the waiting list. The average price of gas in Chicago right now is \$4.13, but E85 oil is approximately \$3.84 at Shell gas stations, and Chicago has taken notice. According to HybridCars.com, Chicago is one of the top five sales markets with 2,748 sales, and adding other parts of Illinois, the total is 3,438. The other four top state sales include California, Florida, New York, and Texas, with California leading the pack.

At dealerships like Grossinger Autoplex in Lincolnwood, Illinois, the hybrids are going before the blink of an eye. SUV drivers now have the opportunity to drive SUVs like the GMC Yukon trucks that burn approximately 20 miles per gallon (mpg) in the city and on the highway, and car lovers can drive vehicles like the Toyota Prius, which burns 48 mpg in the city and 46 mpg on the highway.

"Since gas prices went up, everybody's been ordering hybrid cars," said Will Gordon, GM Specialist and Cadillac Sales representative for Grossinger. "Most full-sized trucks get 12 to 16 miles per gallon. This one is getting 20 miles per gallon. And so far this year we've had 20 Hybrid Yukons, and we only have four now. Supply and demand-General Motors is not making them fast enough. After a year maybe, GMC will meet the demand."

If an SUV lover is into loaded trucks, the GMC Yukon, the first Hybrid Yukon truck in the world, may do the trick, with leather seats, rear navigation, camera, dual climate control, heated front seats, heated steering wheel, rain system wipers, power seats, 7 or 8 passenger seating, 2-wheel drive or 4-wheel drive, wireless headphones, 7-inch Panasonic screen, turn signal side mirrors, quiet engine, 6-speed transmission, and a shift gear without the clutch. The Yukon also has the option to use E85 gas or regular gas, and it can be mixed. The warranty is for 5 years/100,000 miles.

If you're not interested in big body trucks, other dealerships are introducing smaller vehicles, such as the Prius previously mentioned. Car models also include Audi Q7 Hybrid, Volvo 3CCC, Toyota Hybrid X, Ford Reflex, Mercedes S400 Hybrid, Porsche Cayenne Hybrid, Lexus GS 450h, Honda Civic Hybrid, and many more. Although the Lexus topped the list with a hybrid car at \$104,000, other Hybrids range in the \$20,000 to \$35,000 ranges.

"When hybrid cars first came out, everybody [in Illinois] got at least two of these vehicles," said Gordon. "It depended on how well they were selling them."

Beware of dealerships like Northbrook Toyota in Northbrook, Illinois that require a \$500 deposit to be put on the waiting list, but sales representatives say "management prefers that we do not predict a timeframe for delivery at this time." Another Grossinger dealership had 200 people on the waiting list and would not take anymore. A consumer tapping her fingers at number 201 shouldn't hold her breath nor should one who has deposited five Benjamin Franklins with no guarantee of time to get her car regardless of there being other dealerships to choose from.

"I think hybrids are a step towards the future in making this world better-saving people money, getting better gas mileage," speculated Gordon.

In the front panel of hybrid trucks and cars, a driver can see when the engine goes from hybrid power to engine power. "Most of the E85s are active fuel management, and so what happens is at a steady speed, the motor breaks down into 4-cylinder speed, and it stays in that mode for a couple second," said Gordon. When gas mileage goes up and down as the two engines switch, in V4 mode, the hybrid is burning less gas.

Factories and homes don't compete with the amount of pollution that cars are pouring out, and global warming could affect the number of people flooding from the Arctic ice for 20 to 50 million people. Hybrid cars use E85 oil, which reduces smog-forming emissions by about 50 percent in comparison to gasoline. And if cellulosic ethanol is used, scientists are predicting

Takeaways

- Grossinger Autoplex (Lincolnwood, IL) has hybrid trucks onhand--no waiting list.
- "Since gas prices went up, everybody's been ordering hybrid cars," said Will Gordon, car salesman.
- Toyota Prius vehicles burn 48 miles per gallon in the city while the average car burns 21 mpg.