

More Hybrid Vehicle Info

What about those batteries in hybrid vehicles?

As indicated above, even taking into account the larger batteries, reputable studies show hybrid vehicles as an overall environmental winner.

- ∞ Toyota has a comprehensive battery recycling program in place and has been recycling nickel-metal hydride batteries since the RAV4 Electric Vehicle was introduced in 1998. Every part of the battery, from the precious metals to the plastic, plates, steel case and the wiring, is recycled. To ensure that batteries come back to Toyota, each battery has a phone number on it to call for recycling information and dealers are paid a \$200 "bounty" for each battery.[1]
- ∞ Hybrid batteries are designed to last for the life of the vehicle, and experience to date indicates that they will probably last that long. They may only be warranted for 80-100,000 miles, but bear in mind that this is better than most warranties out there, and most vehicles don't fall apart the minute the warranty is up.[1]
- ∞ According to Berkeley Toyota, they will take your old battery if and when you need a new one. And, they will replace it (for some price) with a state-of-the-art battery, which are being designed to work with existing Prius's.[2]

[1] http://hybridblog.typepad.com/my_weblog/2006/10/index.html (UCS Blog)

[2] Nancy's conversation with Berkeley Toyota sales rep.

Not all hybrids are equal. There are 5 Steps to Hybridization (from hybridcenter.org):

1. Idle-off capability (e.g., Chevy Silverado – not really a "hybrid")
2. Regenerative braking capacity
3. Power Assist and Engine downsizing (at this step you reach a "mild" hybrid --(Honda Civic & Insight)
4. Electric-only drive (at this step you reach a "full" hybrid – Prius, Ford Escape)
5. Extended battery-electric range (at this step you become a "plug-in" hybrid)

Toyota's Hybrids will get be getting cheaper. Toyota recently has announced its plans to employ a smaller and less expensive hybrid system around 2008, two years earlier than it previously announced schedule.

More HOV Access Stickers Available

California law allows single-occupant use of High Occupancy Vehicle (HOVs) lanes by certain alternative fuel (hydrogen fuel cell, CNG), clean hybrid, and full-electric vehicles. Hybrid vehicles are currently limited to a maximum of 75,000 vehicles. **An additional 10,000 vehicles will be permitted starting January 1, 2007.** The sunset date for the program was extended by three years to 2011. Use of these lanes with only one occupant requires an identification sticker issued by the California Department of Motor Vehicles.

Note: A California Department of Transportation report which found that some carpool lanes were becoming congested with hybrids, reducing the incentive to carpool.

This information is from <http://www.arb.ca.gov/msprog/carpool/carpool.htm> (updated November 1, 2006) and <http://go.ucsusa.org/hybridcenter/buyersguide.cfm>

Link to application form and instructions: www.dmv.ca.gov/forms/reg/reg1000.htm

Compiled by Nancy Rader, November 2006