

Thirsty hybrid and electric cars could triple demands on scarce water resources

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Electric and hybrid vehicles could raise water consumption in the United States. Scientists are reporting that cars driven with electricity consume about three times more water than those with gasoline. Credit: Courtesy of Austin Energy

Eco-minded drivers in drought-prone states take note: A new study concludes that producing electricity for hybrid and fully electric vehicles could sharply increase water consumption in the United States. It is scheduled for the June 1 issue of ACS' *Environmental Science & Technology*.

In the study, Carey W. King and Michael E. Webber note that policy makers often neglect the impact that fleets of hybrid and electric vehicles could have on already-scarce water resources.

They calculated water usage, consumption, and withdrawal during petroleum refining and electricity generation in the United States. Each mile driven with electricity consumes about three times more water (0.32 versus 0.07-0.14 gallons per mile) than with gasoline, the study found.

“This is not to say that the negative impacts on water resources make such a shift undesirable,” King and Webber emphasized. “Rather this increase in water usage presents a significant potential impact on regional water resources and should be considered when planning for a plugged-in automotive economy.”

Source: ACS

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