

Nissan sells out electric Leaf before it hits US showrooms

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Japanese auto company Nissan Motor displays the company's Leaf electric vehicle. US consumers looking to get Nissan's all-electric Leaf will have to wait another year, after dealers sold this year's entire shipment before the zippy sedan even hit showrooms, the Japanese automaker said Monday.

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Nissan dealers have collected more than 20,000 orders for the Leaf, and the bulk are wealthy "early adapters" on the west coast of the United States, said Carlos Tavares, chairman of Nissan's management committee for the Americas.

The next step will be to convince "pragmatists" that an electric vehicle

will save them money, he said.

The Leaf will be introduced later this month and Nissan is in the midst of installing charging stations at more than 40 US dealers.

More than 90 percent of the customers who reserved the Leaf -- which has a suggested retail price of 32,780 dollars -- live within 10 miles of one of those dealers, Tavares said.

By January 2011, more than 150 dealers will have chargers installed in the targeted launch markets of California, Oregon, Washington, Arizona and Tennessee.

The next Leaf shipment is not scheduled to arrive, however, until October 2011.

Nissan's production capacity is currently limited to a single Japanese plant, but is set to expand dramatically in 2012 when a Tennessee plant capable of building 125,000 units comes online.

[Nissan](#) also plans to introduce an all-electric commercial van in 2014, Tavares told the Detroit Automotive Press Association.

The vehicles will help shape Nissan's image with US consumers, which Tavares said had become blurred in recent years.

"It's a flag demonstrating how innovative we are," Tavares said.

One drawback has been the appreciation of the Japanese yen, which is driving up the price of vehicles and batteries imported from Japan.

"We are very, very concerned," he said.

"This is actually going to increase the pressure for localization."

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