

## BMW rolls out electric i3 and i8 models

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The all-electric i3 is aimed at the urban [car market](#) and should hit

dealerships in 2012. The hybrid i8 is due for delivery in 2014 and is more geared towards high-performance auto enthusiasts.

"This is an important new milestone in BMW's history," chief executive Norbert Reithofer declared as the vehicles were shown to media.

"As the leading premium auto manufacturer in the world, we wanted to offer clients automobiles that were made to order, with an electric motor," he added.



An i8 electric car by German car maker BMW Group is presented in Frankfurt, western Germany. The concept car is partly built from a carbon fiber tightened synthetic material produced in the US.

The i8 combines electric and gas-powered engines to allow for long-distance travel, while the compact i3 is clearly designed for city use.

Both have a lightweight aluminium chassis and a reinforced carbon-fibre body to compensate for the weight of the batteries.

The cars are to be made at a plant in Leipzig where the company plans to invest some 400 million euros (\$575 million) and create 800 jobs by 2013.

German automakers, known mainly for powerful vehicles, are trying to catch up with companies like Toyota that got an early start with [hybrid cars](#).

The companies must also meet stricter European Union emissions levels starting from next year.

BMW did not provide details on how much the cars would cost or how many would be made, but the company reiterated that premium car owners were targeted.

German media reports have spoken of 30,000 vehicles per year, which would be well below full-scale production levels, while analysts have warned the cars would not sell well if overpriced.

BMW finance director Friedrich Eichiner pledged however that the models presented Friday would "make a contribution" to the group's earnings.

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