

## Ford, University of Michigan open new battery lab (Update)

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Ford Motor Co. and the University of Michigan are opening a new battery research and manufacturing lab that they hope will speed the development of batteries for electric and hybrid cars.

The center, on the university's campus in Ann Arbor, will bring together battery makers, car companies and researchers who will test new batteries for prototype vehicles.

Ted Miller, who manages battery research at Ford, said the lab will be unique in the U.S. He said that labs currently testing new battery chemistries can't produce them in the amounts or formats needed for automotive research. And battery companies aren't always sure that what they're developing could be useful to the automotive industry.

Ford and other automakers all have labs where they test batteries for durability and quality, Miller said. But that's happening very late in the battery development process. The new lab could ensure that automakers' input is heard earlier.

Electric cars have been slow sellers, making up less than 1 percent of U.S. auto sales last year. Gas-electric hybrids and plug-in hybrids—which can go further on electricity—sell in larger numbers, but still make up just 3 percent of sales. That's partly because the batteries in those cars can add thousands of dollars to their price tags. Battery costs are expected to fall over the next decade, as new materials are discovered and production increases. The new lab could accelerate that.

"There's a lot of hunger for this," Miller told media last week at Ford's battery research facility near its headquarters in Dearborn. He said the lab should be able to start making batteries early next year.

The \$8 million center received a \$5 million grant from the Michigan Economic Development Corp., a public-private agency, and \$900,000 from the university. Ford contributed \$2.1 million, but Miller said other automakers have already asked about doing research there.

"This is open innovation," said Mark Barteau, a professor of advanced energy research and director of Michigan's Energy Institute. "I believe that cooperation between university researchers and industry is essential to create advances that have real-world impact."

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