

# Hyundai to market hydrogen vehicle next year (Update)

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In this Sunday, Nov. 16, 2013, file photo, a model poses next to a Hyundai Tucson facelift on display at the Kuala Lumpur International Motor Show in Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia. In 2014, Hyundai says it will start selling Tucson SUV powered by a hydrogen fuel cell. It will be the first mass-market vehicle of its type to be sold or leased in the U.S. (AP Photo/Lai Seng Sin, File)

For years, the joke in the auto industry was that a mass-produced car that runs on hydrogen was always a decade away.

That will change next year when Hyundai starts selling a Tucson SUV powered by a hydrogen fuel cell. It will be the first mass-market vehicle of its type to be sold or leased in the U.S.

"These things are now ready for prime time," John Krafcik, Hyundai's North American CEO, said last week. His company plans to announce details of the new Tucson on Wednesday at the Los Angeles Auto Show.

Even as the industry focused on battery-powered and hybrid cars, automakers such as Hyundai, Honda and Toyota kept up research on fuel cells. Now they appear to have conquered obstacles such as high costs, safety concerns and a lack of filling stations. These vehicles could help the companies meet stricter future fuel-economy standards.

Automakers have been dabbling in hydrogen-powered cars since the 1960s. General Motors announced a test fleet of hydrogen-powered Chevy Equinoxes in the mid-2000s, and Honda leased about two-dozen FCX Clarity models for \$600 per month starting in 2005.

President George W. Bush allocated \$1.2 billion for hydrogen research and said in his 2003 State of the Union address: "The first car driven by a child born today could be powered by hydrogen and pollution free." But the program was largely scrapped by the Obama administration, which focused more on battery-powered vehicles.

Hyundai now is making Bush's forecast come true, beating other auto companies to the mass market with Tucsons that have electric motors powered by a stack of hydrogen fuel cells. Hyundai plans to start selling the vehicles in Southern California and eventually spread to other areas as filling stations are built.

Hyundai says it has overcome safety and storage issues with a rear-mounted tank that has passed numerous crash tests without incident. As

for filling stations, the California Air Resources Board says there currently are nine open to the public in the state. Legislators recently allocated about \$100 million, or \$20 million a year, to build 100 more.

Also at the Los Angeles show, Honda Motor Co. is scheduled to show off a fuel-cell concept vehicle, which it says hints at the aerodynamic design of the next generation fuel-cell vehicle to be launched in 2015. Further details weren't available.

Toyota Motor Corp. is scheduled to unveil its own concept fuel-cell vehicle at this week's Tokyo Motor Show. That one also is likely for distribution in the mass market in 2015.

General Motors continues work on its fuel-cell vehicles.

The largest U.S. automaker, which has spent a lot of time and resources on battery-powered cars such as the Chevrolet Volt, has no fuel-cell vehicles currently in its new product pipeline, spokesman Dan Flores said Monday. He said more work needs to be done on cost and infrastructure to make the cars viable.

Hyundai is expected to introduce prices and details of how its cars will be sold or leased at the Los Angeles show. Automakers usually offer leases when they put new technology on the market.

Hydrogen cars likely will help automakers meet new goals from eight key states to put more zero-emissions cars on the road. The states, including California and New York, pledged late last month to work together to put 3.3 million battery-powered cars, plug-in hybrids and other clean-burning vehicles on the roads in those states by 2025. That's more than 15 times as many zero-emission vehicles projected to be in use in the entire U.S. by 2015.

The other states in the pact are Massachusetts, Maryland, Oregon, Connecticut, Rhode Island and Vermont. The eight states together represent about 23 percent of the U.S. auto market.

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