

Panasonic Engineers Introduce Methanol Fuel Cell Prototype

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Panasonic Fuel Cell Prototype for Notebooks. Image: Panasonic

Panasonic Fuel Cell Prototype for Mobile Devices. Image: Panasonic

(PhysOrg.com) -- Engineers at Panasonic will showcase their new reduced size methanol fuel cell at the Hydrogen Energy Advanced Technology Exhibition 2008 in Fukuoka, Kyushu, Japan. Japan's most populated city will host the exhibit on October 22-24, 2008.

Panasonic has been working on reducing the size and increasing the efficiency of its previously introduced fuel cell over the past eight-years. The new methanol fuel cell is about the size of a laptop battery. The fuel cell battery weighs approximately 11.29-ounces and can deliver an average of 10-watts of power with a maximum output of 20-watts.

According to Panasonic, the new methanol fuel cell battery has the unique advantage of being able to run 20-hours utilizing 200cc methanol. When the fuel cell runs low on methanol a quick refueling takes a few minutes. Unlike lithium ion batteries, methanol fuel cells are viewed as more environmentally friendly. The only by-product is water and a slight amount of carbon dioxide.

Panasonic does not have present plans to commercially distribute the methanol fuel cell for laptops and other electronic devices. Panasonic speculates that the new methanol fuel cell may be available in the commercial market by 2012. Recognizing the ever increasing need for "high accuracy fuel technology,"

Panasonic believes the methanol fuel cell holds great promise for the commercial electronics market and will spend whatever time it takes to perfect the technology. Critics of the methanol fuel cell are concerned about the initial cost and maintenance. At this juncture in development, Panasonic has not stated what the cost will be for the methanol fuel cell. The concept of a battery with 20-hours of use and no hazardous by-products will definitely be taken into consideration when pricing it for market.

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