

Electric, diesel or hybrid car? Cost and CO2 calculator helps consumers choose

November 18 2010, By Susan Carpenter

As the Environmental Protection Agency struggles with how to accurately label passenger vehicles for fuel economy and greenhouse-gas emissions, a new online cost and CO2 emissions calculator has launched to help fill the void.

"Electrics, hybrids, plug-ins, all these alternative powertrain cars are a hot topic these days, but there's not a good way to look at the bottom line of what it costs to own one of these," said Jon Lal, founder of BeFrugal.com, a frugal-living website that offers tools to help consumers save money, including its new calculator.

The calculator (at www.befrugal.com/tools/electric-car-calculator/) allows consumers to first determine which type of alternative-drivetrain vehicle best suits their driving needs based on what state they live in, how many city and highway miles they drive, how many road trips they take each year (and at what distance) and [fuel costs](#) in their state, whether it be electricity, gas or diesel.

Using its database of 64 vehicles (four electric, eight diesel, 13 hybrid and 39 popular gas-powered cars) the calculator then allows users to make side-by-side comparisons using EPA miles-per-gallon data, manufacturers' suggested retail prices and other factors.

Electric car operating costs are translated into an mpg equivalent, or MPGe, using individual states' electricity costs as calculated by the U.S. Department of Energy. Electric cars' upstream [carbon dioxide emissions](#)

are also calculated using DOE data on the electricity source for each state.

According to BeFrugal.com, Washington, Idaho, Kentucky, West Virginia and Arkansas are the states with the lowest electricity rates, making [electric cars](#) most economical on a cost-per-mile basis. Vermont, Idaho, Washington, Oregon and New Hampshire are the best states in terms of electric cars' lowest upstream [CO2 emissions](#) per kilowatt-hour.

The top two states for electric cars' lowest operating costs and greenhouse-gas emissions: Idaho and Washington.

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