Hydrogen-powered ice resurfacer promoted

30 May 2007

A U.S. Department of Energy-funded fuel-cell-powered ice resurfacer is touring ice rinks across the United States, promoting use of hydrogen fuel cells.

The vehicle, called the eP-ICEBEAR, is the world's first fuel-cell-powered ice resurfacer. Its development was led by the University of North Dakota's Energy & Environmental Research Center.

Energy Department officials said the crowded, enclosed space of ice arenas make them perfect venues for the introduction of hydrogen-powered vehicles. Unlike propane-powered ice resurfacers that sometimes cause dangerous carbon monoxide buildups on the ice while resurfacing, the eP-ICEBEAR has no harmful exhaust -- plain water is the only emission.

Also, officials added, unlike batteries, hydrogen-powered vehicles don't gradually lose power or have to be recharged from electrical sources; rather, they continually produce their own electricity by being refueled, like a car engine.

The Energy Department said fuel cells have the potential to provide the United States with greater energy security, extend fossil fuel reserves and reduce dependence on imported fuels.