

In The Driver's Seat

Fast Facts About Hybrids

by Bobby Hamilton

(NAPSA)—On the racetrack, I focus on winning, while squeezing the most out of the gas in my tank. When I'm off the track and on the highway just like you, we're probably both thinking a whole lot more about the high price of gas and ways to hold down our costs.



Bobby Hamilton

In fact, high gas costs have steered many people toward the most fuel-efficient cars

on the market—new hybrid-electric vehicles—and automakers have responded.

According to Brad Eggleston, vice president of AutoVantage, “Most major automobile manufacturers are beginning to include hybrid cars as a cost-effective solution to combat record gas prices while at the same time helping the environment.”

If you're thinking of getting a hybrid, you might find these facts helpful.

- The hybrid combines a gasoline-powered engine and a battery-operated motor to achieve superior fuel efficiency. No outlets needed.

- A process called regenerative braking recharges the car's battery by using its momentum as energy. This not only allows the hybrid to use less gasoline, but also emits less carbon dioxide.

- Compared to their “traditional” competition, hybrids often pack better acceleration because of their additional electric motor.



High gas prices have fueled a surge in hybrid purchases.

- Some hybrid models get 50 miles per gallon in the city.

- A number of new hybrids are coming to market. Hybrid options run the gamut: sedans, SUVs and trucks. Hybrid trucks, which come equipped with multiple outlets for power tool use, essentially turn your pickup into a generator.

- Hybrid cars “cost an average of about \$3,000 more than conventional-gas cars,” according to Consumer Reports. However, hybrid owners will probably save in the long run because their vehicles get about 19 percent more MPG in the city than conventional vehicles. Plus, hybrids' regular maintenance intervals stretch further than those of their conventional counterparts.

Bobby Hamilton, a spokesman for AutoVantage, is the current NASCAR Craftsman Truck Series Champion after achieving four career NASCAR Winston Cup Series victories. He founded Bobby Hamilton Racing, which owns and operates three trucks in the NASCAR circuit.