

# News Release



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## **Prius passes the test Additional hybrid gas/electric cars purchased**

HOUSTON, February 27, 2002 – In 2001, the City Planning and Development Department's Code Enforcement Group purchased five Toyota Prius hybrid gas/electric vehicles as a six-month pilot program. After a successful test, 27 additional vehicles are being purchased for city building inspectors.

With more than 150 inspectors checking construction sites across a city that spans 621 square miles, the Code Enforcement Group uses more than 130,000 gallons of gas a year.

The City's Building Official, Melvin Embry, recommended the City examine the use of hybrid gas/electric cars as a way to cut fuel costs and drive cleaner more efficient vehicles. "I knew the cars were available in the market and suggested testing their capability for high capacity use," said Embry.

The City is the first employer in Houston to implement a clean fuel program. "If the vehicles continue to perform as well as they have, we will begin replacing the remaining fleet vehicles in our division with the hybrid cars," said assistant director for Building Inspection and Permitting, Allen Largent.

During the six-month trial phase, the inspectors averaged 12,000 miles per inspector. The cars averaged 39.5 miles to the gallon compared to the standard fleet vehicle that gets about 18 miles to the gallon (an average savings of nearly 21 miles per gallon). More importantly, the pollution causing emission NOx, was reduced by 166.5 pounds total for the six-month period.

The City estimates that it will realize cost savings of between \$3,000 and \$4,000 in gasoline costs per year (depending on the price of gas) with the five hybrid vehicles alone. Only preventative maintenance has been performed on the cars to date.

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Not only are the cars helping the air quality of Houston, inspectors are satisfied with the performance of the vehicle. "It drives great," said building inspector Freddy Ellis. "You can't tell the difference between the Prius and any other automobile, and it handles really well in Houston's tough traffic." Plumbing inspector Douglas Petrich added "I would consider owning one. They drive that well."

The Toyota Prius, the world's first mass-produced hybrid vehicle, combines an efficient, powerful gasoline-fueled internal combustion engine and a clean, quiet electric motor. The Prius carries an EPA fuel economy rating of 52 miles per gallon city, 45 mpg highway. With an SULEV (super ultra low emission vehicle) certification, the Prius is about 75 percent cleaner than ULEV (ultra low emission vehicle) and nearly 90 percent cleaner than LEV (low emission vehicle) for smog exhaust gases.

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