

California Unveils State's First Hydrogen Refueling Station (22 Oct 2004 05:10 UTC)

California Governor Arnold Schwarzenegger has unveiled his state's first hydrogen refueling station in Los Angeles. The official says it marks the start of a transition as cars convert from gasoline to hydrogen fuel cells.

There are only a handful of hydrogen-powered cars in Los Angeles now, prototypes used by a university, the city government and the airport authority. This refueling station, located at the Los Angeles International Airport, is the state's first. Mr. Schwarzenegger, who drove up in a hydrogen-fueled Hummer - a heavy duty sports utility vehicle, says the clean-burning fuel will one day power what he calls a "hydrogen highway."

"We will not just dream about the hydrogen highway," he said. "We will not just dream about the hydrogen fueling stations. We will not just dream about the hydrogen cars. We will build it."

Hydrogen fuel costs more than four times as much as gasoline does today, but the cost is expected to come down as usage grows. California environmental official Terry Tamminen says the rising cost of fossil fuel will make the transition to hydrogen more attractive.

"We hear that the price of oil is over \$55 a barrel this morning, and going up," he said. "And as we start to mass-produce clean, locally produced hydrogen, the price of that will come down as the price of oil goes up because it is a limited commodity."

State officials say hydrogen, on the other hand, is the most abundant element in the universe. And when used as fuel, its only byproduct is water.

The Los Angeles fueling station is operated by the petroleum firm BP [British Petroleum]. Earlier this week, the company unveiled its first hydrogen facility to be built under new U.S. guidelines in Detroit.

Most major automakers are developing fuel cell cars. DaimlerChrysler built the five that operate at the Los Angeles airport.