

Companies Racing To Build Electric Car



For many years, people have talked about creating a car that is powered by electricity rather than gasoline. Since gasoline prices can rise quickly from time to time, some companies are working harder and faster to try to build an electric car.

One reason that companies have had trouble building an electric car is that they could not find a battery that worked well. Then someone suggested trying the kind of batteries used to power laptop computers. Scientists have found that those batteries, called *lithium-ion batteries*, work better in cars than other batteries.

A California company called Tesla Motors has designed the first all-electric sports car. That car, called the Roadster, will sell for \$109,000. The car can travel more than 200 miles before its battery pack -- which contains more than 6,000 small lithium-ion batteries -- must be recharged by plugging it into an electric outlet. It will take from four and 30 hours to fully charge the car's battery pack.

General Motors (GM) also has created an electric car. Their car, called the Volt, will go on sale in 2010. The Volt will use a large T-shaped lithium-ion battery pack that is as long as the car. The car will run about 40 miles on its batteries. If the battery pack runs low as someone is driving the car, a small gasoline engine will start and make enough electricity for the car to run for another 300 miles. The Volt's battery pack can be recharged in a few hours.

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MORE FACTS ABOUT ELECTRIC CARS

- The first electric cars will be expensive. The Volt might cost as much as \$40,000.
- Electric cars are not completely "green." Much of the electricity used to power them will come from burning coal, which produces greenhouse gases.
- If electric cars become popular, communities and power companies will need to build "charging stations" so drivers can power up their car batteries.

THINK ABOUT THE NEWS

If electric cars become popular, what kind of changes might you see in your community?