

Biz Buzz: Free Malibu Hybrid part of Chevy promotion

By Sentinel Staff

Hanford Sentinel Friday, Aug. 7, 2009

HANFORD -- Central Valley Chevrolet Dealers, including Keller Motors in Hanford, will be giving away a brand new Malibu Hybrid to promote Healthy Air Living throughout the Valley.

A new Malibu hybrid car is the grand prize in the summer clean-air contest. The contest, open to anyone 18 years and older and a resident of the eight-county air basin, encourages residents to submit clean-air pledges to reduce pollution-causing emissions and put Healthy Air Living principles into practice in their lives.

The contest began this week, and runs through September. Residents can enter by visiting Keller Motors or one of 18 other participating Chevy dealerships in the Central Valley.

Entries are limited to one person, and additional rules and regulations apply. For full details and an online version of the pledge card, visit www.healthyairliving.com or contact the Valley Air District in Fresno at (559) 230-6000.

UC Davis wants new 'village' to be affordably green

By Jim Downing

Modesto Bee, Tuesday, Aug. 11, 2009

The idea that green buildings can make financial as well as environmental sense is central to California's plans to fight global warming.

Now, a housing project at the University of California, Davis, will test whether it works on a large scale, using a \$2 million grant awarded Monday by the California Energy Commission.

The goal is to make the new 4,000-resident West Village student and faculty housing development the nation's largest "zero net energy" community – one that produces as much energy in a year as it draws from natural gas pipelines and the electrical grid.

With enough money, it's fairly straightforward to meet that standard. Doing it in a large, privately financed development is another matter.

"We're trying to figure out what is feasible," said Nolan Zail, principal partner with West Village Community Partnership, the project developer.

The grant will fund analysis and design work aimed at optimizing the mix of renewable energy technologies in the community – from photovoltaic panels and solar hot water heaters to an electricity-generating fuel cell run on gas made from campus food scraps.

The West Village buildings are already designed to be very efficient, with heat-reflecting roofs and ventilation systems that take advantage of cool summer evening breezes. The grant would help Zail figure out how much additional efficiency he needs to wring out of the buildings – by upgrading insulation or windows, for instance – as well as the most cost-effective approach. The analysis will also explore new ways to finance green building technologies, which generally pay for themselves over time but carry high up-front costs.

The project will also examine how residents use energy – a poorly documented area in the energy-efficiency field.

"We're going to become a living laboratory," said Sid England, UC Davis assistant vice chancellor for environmental stewardship and sustainability.

If residents respond to their super-efficient environment by becoming careless users of energy, for instance – leaving their compact fluorescents on all day, taking half-hour showers under their low-flow showerheads – it would be difficult for the community to meet the zero net energy goal.

State officials are looking to the project to blaze the trail for their long-term plans to cut building energy use. Gov. Arnold Schwarzenegger has called for all new residential buildings to be zero net energy by 2020, with new commercial buildings to meet the same standard by 2030.

The West Village project should illuminate obstacles to meeting those goals and help drive innovation.

"Showing that this can be done is part of making the breakthroughs happen," said Karen Douglas, chairwoman of the California Energy Commission, in an interview Monday.

The use of gas, electricity and water in buildings accounts for about a quarter of California's greenhouse-gas emissions. State officials are counting on efficiency improvements and changes in building practices to deliver about 15 percent of the emissions reductions called for under Assembly Bill 32, which requires the state by 2020 to shrink its carbon footprint back to its 1990 size.

Preliminary construction work on the West Village site is under way, with the first student apartments opening in fall 2011. When fully built out, the 205-acre plan calls for 475 single-family dwellings for university faculty and staff as well as multi-unit buildings for 3,000 students, retail and office space, and a new site for the Davis branch of Sacramento City College. The project will be built in several phases, allowing for energy-related design modifications as it progresses, Zail said.

While the land belongs to the university, Zail's group is financing and building the project, and will sell homes to faculty and staff and rent apartments to students.

The project was proposed in the late 1990s but faced many delays, including a court challenge from a neighborhood group. For more information, see westvillage.ucdavis.edu.

Mexico has advantage in WCup qualifier against US

By Stephen Wade, The Associated Press

In the San Diego Union-Tribune, USA Today and other papers, Tuesday, August 11, 2009

MEXICO CITY — Almost everything seems to favor Mexico in Wednesday's critical World Cup qualifier against the United States.

The altitude of 7,400 feet always leaves visiting teams gasping for air, particularly in the second half. Then there's the 105,000-seat Estadio Azteca, a cauldron of searing noise that makes it one of the world's most intimidating venues. Now add in Mexico's dominating record against the U.S., the [air pollution](#) and the afternoon start.

"We have to take advantage of all those factors," said Guillermo Ochoa, Mexico's talented keeper. "We have to keep in mind we have 90 minutes to win, whether it's 1-0 or 5-0."

The U.S. national team has never won a game in Mexico dating from 1937. In 23 games, the US has lost 22 and drawn one.

Mexico also has all the pressure.

El Tri is struggling to qualify for next year's 32-team tournament in South Africa, while the U.S. is comfortably placed. A 5-0 victory over a U.S. "B" team late last month in the Gold Cup final at Giants Stadium has lessened some of the pressure.

But it has also raised expectations.

"We have this chance in our own hands to make up for what has happened in earlier qualifying games," Ochoa said.

If one teams needs the victory more, it's Mexico.

Midway through qualifying, Costa Rica leads the North, Central America and Caribbean region with 12 points, followed by the United States (10), Honduras (7), Mexico (6), El Salvador (5) and

Trinidad and Tobago (2). The top three advance automatically to South Africa. No. 4 faces a playoff with No. 5 from South America for another berth.

In Wednesday's other qualifiers, Trinidad is home against El Salvador and Honduras

GM says mercury pollution not its problem anymore

By Ken Thomas

Modesto Bee, New York Times, S.F. Chronicle and other papers, Tuesday, Aug. 10, 2009

WASHINGTON -- As hundreds of thousands of clunkers head to the scrap yard, General Motors has dropped out of a partnership that collects toxic parts from recycled automobiles to prevent mercury pollution.

Participants in the environmental program told The Associated Press the timing of GM's departure could undermine their work. The government's "cash-for-clunkers" program will lead to trade-in and recycling of an estimated 750,000 vehicles, some of which contain mercury switches.

GM said its new company is not a member of the partnership because it no longer makes vehicles with mercury switches and is not responsible for the older vehicles. The old company, which is still under bankruptcy court supervision, said it is reviewing agreements involving the former company and declined to comment.

Roughly 36 million mercury switches were used in trunk convenience lights and antilock brakes in vehicles built in the 1980s and 1990s. More than half of them are in GM vehicles built before 2000.

Mercury released into the air can accumulate in plants, fish and humans. Children and fetuses are vulnerable to the effects of the toxic metal, which can damage the development of the nervous system.

The auto industry partnership, called the End of Life Vehicle Solutions Corp., or ELVS, was created in 2005 to prevent mercury emissions from being released into the environment when vehicles are crushed and shredded. It works closely with the National Vehicle Mercury Switch Recovery Program, which the Environmental Protection Agency helped form with automakers, the steel industry and environmentalists in 2006.

The program, which is scheduled to run until 2017, has recovered 2.5 million switches and disposed of nearly 5,600 pounds of mercury. General Motors, prior to its bankruptcy, was the group's largest participant and informed the partnership of the change last week.

Mary Bills, the partnership's executive director, said GM has not paid its dues since filing for bankruptcy. Its annual bill is \$700,000 to \$1 million, a substantial portion of the program's funding. Without GM's payments, the organization may be forced to scale back or cease operations, making it more difficult for recyclers to dispose of mercury recovered under the \$3 billion "cash-for-clunkers" program and other recycled vehicles in the future, she said.

"We're surprised that GM, who wants to have this great, green image, would do this," Bills said.

General Motors Co., 60.8 percent owned by the U.S. government, emerged from Chapter 11 bankruptcy protection last month under a plan in which its best-performing assets were sold to form a new company. The former company, now called Motors Liquidation Co., is a conglomeration of GM's liabilities and underperforming assets that remains under court supervision.

GM spokeswoman Sharon Basel said GM's former entity remains a member of the partnership. The new automaker, however, "has never produced vehicles with mercury switches and has no mercury switch responsibility under the terms of the bankruptcy court order," Basel said.

Tim Yost, a Motors Liquidation spokesman, declined to comment about the partnership, saying the old company has been analyzing its nearly 500,000 contracts and agreements, "including this one."

ELVS manages programs to collect and dispose of the mercury switches, providing white storage buckets to recyclers to collect them. Thirteen automakers participate, including Chrysler Group LLC, Ford Motor Co. and Daimler AG, and the companies' fees are based on market share and their portions of the switch population.

Fifteen states require automakers to set up a collection system to recycle the switches. Most of them also require recyclers to remove the switches before a vehicle is shredded. Thirty-four states conduct voluntary programs. Maine has its own program.

Bills said it was unclear how they would continue service in the 34 states without more funding.

In a letter Friday, Bills told the 15 states with auto industry requirements that the ELVS board would "continue to recycle any GM switches that arrive at our waste contractor in our collection buckets as long as funds permit." If the organization remains unfunded for the GM costs, "we will no longer be able to accept GM switches for recycling," she wrote.

The 15 states with the requirements for automakers are Arkansas, Illinois, Indiana, Iowa, Louisiana, Maryland, Massachusetts, New Jersey, North Carolina, Rhode Island, South Carolina, Texas, Utah, Vermont and Virginia.