

# GM executive says oil situation is not likely to get any better

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New cars may save money at the pump

There's a lot of concern and even some anger over high gas prices. But according to a top auto industry official the oil situation is not likely to get any better. Dr. Lawrence Burns is General Motors' vice president for research and development. On Friday he visited the company's fuel cell research center in Honeoye Falls and the RIT campus.

Burns says hydrogen fuel cell vehicles, like the one being developed in Honeoye Falls, will begin competing with the internal combustion engine by 2010. "We think we can create a more exciting car. We think we can create a car that's going to be more affordable."

Dr. Burns spoke at the National Technical Institute for the Deaf about the need to adapt to changes in the workplace. But some of the questions from the audience were about gm's fuel cell research. Dr. Burns painted a disturbing picture of increasing global demand for oil and he said that the future is vehicles that will rely on renewable sources of energy but the technology still has challenges. "Performance. Acceleration, range, cold temperature, high temperatures. We understand that. We have that checked off our list. Cost. It can't cost more than a gasoline engine or we won't sell in high volume. We believe we have a roadmap to meet that target. We have to prove it out."

Burns revealed that the facility in Honeoye Falls is the center of the universe for General Motor's fuel cell research. "That is the brain trust for GM's fuel cell program right here in New York."

Other challenges? Where will the hydrogen come from: water or hydrocarbons? And how do you get a huge infrastructure in place to provide the fuel safely and conveniently. "We can store enough hydrogen onboard our cars to give the range that you want. Our tanks are a little heavy and a little costly right now so we'll have to solve that," said Burns.

As far as mileage, Burns says the equivalent gasoline cost per gallon comparison is in the \$1.00 to \$1.50 range. "Yes, hybrids are important. They are an important bridge in technology. Yes, we have to improve our gas engines and out diesel engines as we go forward. But we need a long-term answer for our world and we think its hydrogen and fuel cells."

Dr. Burns did not come right out and answer the question--how much these new vehicles will cost but he indicated they would have to be competitive with new car sticker prices.

