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DaimlerChrysler is the Only Manufacturer Building and Testing Plug-in Hybrid Vehicles with Lithium-Ion Battery Technology in Customer Fleets

- Lithium-ion battery research will accelerate future hybrid development
- DaimlerChrysler investigates plug-in technology with test fleet
- Dodge Sprinter Plug-in Hybrid Electric Vehicle (PHEV) can drive up to 20 real-world miles on electric-only power
- Industry first PHEV combined with diesel for maximum fuel efficiency

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More than 20 Dodge Sprinter Plug-in Hybrid Electric Vehicles (PHEV) will be placed in the United States between now and the first quarter of 2008 as part of a test fleet program. Four of the vehicles are already in operation with customers. DaimlerChrysler is the only auto manufacturer currently evaluating a variety of plug-in hybrid powertrain configurations under customer-operation conditions in real-world service.

Battery development is one of the keys to the success of hybrid and fuel cell transportation. Lithium ion holds the greatest promise for battery technology. A number of the Dodge Sprinter PHEVs are equipped with lithium ion batteries which are about half the weight and have much greater storage capacities when compared to nickel-metal hydride batteries. The vehicles will yield technical information through real world driving conditions about lifetime, performance and cost of batteries.

"The future of plug-in hybrid technology rests on a number of improvements, the most significant being batteries," said Dr. Andreas Truckenbrodt, Executive Director – DaimlerChrysler Hybrid Programs. "The battery systems in the PHEV Sprinter continue to provide valuable data on the possibilities with lithium-ion technology."

Plug-in technology lends itself to commercial applications in which the vehicle returns to base after each shift to be plugged into the power grid but also works well in urban traffic situations for daily commuters.

Based on Mercedes-Benz commercial vehicle technology, the Dodge Sprinter PHEV has the ability to drive up to 20 miles on electric-only power. It accomplishes this with a switch on the dashboard giving the operator the ability to manually switch between modes as needed, or automatically by the vehicle control system. Two different combustion engines are being offered in the PHEV – diesel or gasoline. The diesel version will yield the highest fuel economy benefit and is the first fleet test of a diesel plug-in hybrid system.

Plug-in hybrid technology is part of DaimlerChrysler's advanced propulsion technology umbrella, which also includes exceptionally efficient gasoline engines, advanced diesel technology, ethanol flex-fuel and zero-emission fuel cell vehicles.

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