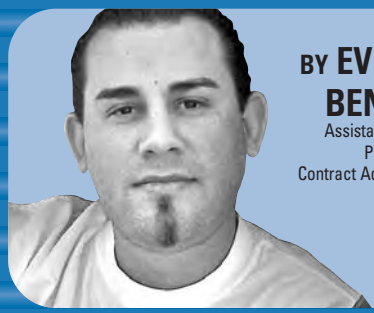


THE CAR CLUB



BY **EVERETT BENNETT**
Assistant Inspector,
Public Works/
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It's Easy Being Green

City Employee drives a hydrogen vehicle as part of a GM test.

John Calderon is a Construction Inspector, Public Works/Contract Administration, and spends his days on buildings built to "green standards." Not only does he enforce plans to make green-friendly buildings, but, off the clock, he also tries to help the environment. He rides his bike or walks to as many places as possible; eats organic; and recycles. So, what does someone like John do to catapult himself deeper into "green territory?" He got his hands on a hydrogen car that didn't cost him a dime, and he didn't risk receiving any jail time over acquiring it.

The "green lifestyle" has become a household term within the last couple of years. Proof of the popularity of living green can be seen in all the hybrids being sold; the government sponsored Cash for Clunkers program being wildly successful; and Jesse James of *Monster Garage* fame breaking the hydrogen land speed record. Not bad when you think that the only damage he did to the environment was leave a puddle of hot water at the end of the track. The search for alternative fuel and other such ideas that might allow us to not leave such a large imprint on the environment aren't just something that the media is hyping up. It is fact that we have done damage to our world, and that it would be bright for us to rethink the way we live so that the next generation can enjoy it as much as we have.

John took part in Project Driveway, hosted by General Motors. GM built a fleet of 100 hydrogen fuel cell electric cars and let people drive them for free for three months in Los Angeles, New York and Washington, D.C. The Project Driveway program is the world's first large-scale test of fuel cell technology. It helps bring awareness of where technology is headed and provides proof that petroleum is not the only fuel option out there.

Alternative fuel for transportation is not a new discovery. Electric- and steam-powered cars go back as far as the 1800s. The inability to travel large distances; the lack of horsepower; the difficulty in generating steam power in freezing weather; and perhaps undue power from oil companies killed those fresh ideas. One hundred years later, it seems we are now scrambling to come up with a solution to our oil dependency.

The Chevy Equinox that John is driving has plenty of torque and horsepower, which get him on the freeway and out of the way of semi-trucks rather quickly. Response at any speed is instant. The



interior is comfortable, but the real treat is the silence of the car. At times I rolled down the window and turned the radio off to make sure it was still on. The motor does not cause any vibration like most of us are used to, but you have to remember to watch running the radio, lights or air conditioner all the time, because that cuts down on your miles per gallon. Why? Because we are running on pure electricity!

A brief description of how hydrogen fuel cell cars work: Compressed hydrogen is pumped into the car, where it is mixed with oxygen. The combination of the two creates water and electricity, the latter being your form of power and the water is your waste. The electricity is then stored in tanks on the car, which are pretty much the same as your gas tank. I hope that, as technology progresses in this field, we can have cars that not only have water as their only waste product, but that, when it comes out of the tailpipe it is chilled and drinkable, and tastes like Fiji or Evian.

I would like to thank John for letting me drive his car for a day and also GM for taking the first step toward our new future of being "green."



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