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These hybrids run on hydrogen
First test vehicles delivered to Southern California cities
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Ten Toyota Prius sedans cruising the streets of Riverside and Santa Ana, Calif., aren't your ordinary hybrids — they're hybrids that run on hydrogen, not gasoline.

Delivered over the last week, the 10 are the first of 30 hydrogen hybrids that the region's air quality agency will test over the next five years.

"These vehicles drive and perform like regular gasoline cars and yet they emit no global warming gases and meet the state's strictest standard for smog-forming pollutants," Santa Ana Mayor Miguel Pulido said in a statement.

Modified by Quantum Fuel Systems Technologies Worldwide, the hydrogen hybrids still use electric power from braking to improve mileage but are refueled with hydrogen instead of gasoline.

Each hydrogen-fueled Prius has a compressed gas fuel cylinder that holds up to 1.6 kilograms of hydrogen, giving the vehicles a range of up to 80 miles per fill.

The $7 million project aims to create a bridge to fuel cell vehicles, which run on hydrogen but are still prohibitively costly.

"The five cities program is aimed at stimulating demand for hydrogen fueling, accelerating the expansion of the region's hydrogen fueling network, and educating the public on hydrogen-fueled vehicles," the South Coast Air Quality Management District said in a statement.

Other cities receiving hydrogen hybrids are Burbank, Ontario and Santa Monica, as well as the air quality agency headquarters in Diamond Bar. Hydrogen refueling stations are also being installed for each city.

The auto industry is spending millions on research into hydrogen-powered vehicles, but the costs of producing the vehicles as well as producing the hydrogen itself make them prohibitively expensive for now.

Automakers hope to have commercial vehicles in a decade or so.

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