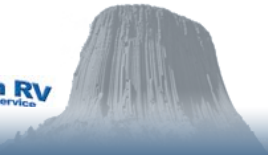


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## Panelists: Alternative fuels need government push

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LARAMIE -- Governments at all levels need to spur development of alternative fuels such as hydrogen to reduce greenhouse gases and foster energy security, panelists said Tuesday at the Mountain States Hydrogen Business Council's hydrogen conference at the University of Wyoming.

Gerald Groenewold of the National Center for Hydrogen Technology at the University of North Dakota said the energy systems in the United States are under "extreme stress." But he noted that if alternative sources were given enough focus, substantial progress could be made within five years.

Groenewold said researchers at his institution have found that producing hydrogen from ethanol appears to be more promising than from natural gas or wind.

I. Engin Ture, scientific director of the International Centre for Hydrogen Energy Technologies in Istanbul, Turkey, said his United Nations-affiliated organization is focusing on developing countries, chiefly China and India, because increasing use of fossil fuel energy in those countries means "we could be in real trouble" with the release of carbon into the atmosphere.

Gerry Runte of ARES Corp. in Santa Fe, N.M., said the general business community cannot by itself bring about a transition to alternative energy technologies. These programs need more uniform standards and regulations, he said, pointing to obstacles such as the New York Port Authority not allowing hydrogen-powered vehicles into the Holland Tunnel.

Don Karner of ETEC in Phoenix said the high gas prices "go a long way to making hydrogen motor fuels more attractive." He said hydrogen fuel can be made very efficiently.



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"The challenge is to get the cost of the equipment that makes hydrogen down, and that's simply a matter of volume," Karner said. The advantage of making hydrogen from water, he said, is that the fuel could be made on-site such as at a service station or at home.

Greenhouse gas emissions from hydrogen vehicles are near zero, he said.

In an interview following the panel, Runte said research and development into alternative and renewable energy sources is often held back by the federal government because of its emphasis on funding only what appear to be economical projects compared to the price of gasoline.

The problem is that the price of gasoline at the pump is artificially low, Runte said, because it does not take into account the huge costs in the defense budget for securing the Mideast oil supply and such factors as the health care costs for respiratory illnesses caused by emissions from gasoline engines.

The conference continues through Thursday. Wyoming Gov. Dave Freudenthal will deliver the keynote address today, and is expected to emphasize the importance of a diverse portfolio of energy sources as the nation moves toward developing regulations on carbon dioxide emissions.

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