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Dodge Ram Contractor Special Doubles Environmental Benefits With Hybrid Powertrain and Clean Auxiliary Power

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DaimlerChrysler has developed a hybrid electric version of its workhorse Dodge Ram pickup that is cleaner and more fuel efficient, while providing enough clean auxiliary power to run a household.

On the road, this all-new hybrid vehicle achieves 15 percent better fuel efficiency, lower emissions and better performance than the comparably-powered conventional Ram. Off the road, the vehicle can be converted to a stationary electrical generator to deliver up to 20 kW of power for work, recreation or home uses. The vehicle's gasoline engine is much cleaner than portable generators, which are not controlled by any emissions regulations.

"We dubbed this vehicle the 'Contractor Special' because it is perfect for construction site work, but we believe the vehicle will also appeal to campers and outdoor enthusiasts, to farmers who have to work on remote sites, and to homeowners who need to keep their households running in the case of a power failure," said Bernard I. Robertson, Senior Vice President, Engineering Technologies and General Manager - Truck Operations for DaimlerChrysler.

"In addition to doubling as a portable generator, the Dodge Ram Contractor Special delivers double the environmental benefits," Robertson added. "It is cleaner than any conventional pickup on the road, and cleaner than current generator technology off the road."

The Contractor Special package is intended for the Ram 1500 and 2500 models, in both the two-wheel drive and four-wheel drive versions. Gas-electric and diesel-electric powertrains are available, depending on the choice of engine. The vehicles can be operated in gasoline/diesel-only and electric-only modes, as well as the hybrid configuration. Production is targeted for calendar year 2004.

The Contractor Specials are anticipated to cost about \$5,000 more than the conventional Ram – a cost-effective package since comparable portable generator capacity would typically cost \$10,000 to \$15,000. The clean electrical generator will add about 250-300 pounds to the vehicle's weight, compared with 2,500 pounds or more for a portable generator. The Contractor Special generator is accessed through electrical sockets in a pull-down box behind the rear fender.

The generator on the Contractor Special will be much cleaner than conventional portable generators, because it will be powered by the vehicle's clean hybrid powertrain. Currently, the Ram can be equipped with 3.9, 5.2 and 5.9 liter gasoline engines and a 5.9 diesel engine. A 8.0 liter, V-10 is also available.

The hybrid powertrain, with electric motor assist, permits use of a smaller internal combustion engine, thus lowering emissions and increasing fuel efficiency compared with a comparably-powered conventional Ram. The hybrid versions outperform their comparably powered conventional counterparts; for example, the 5.2 liter gas electric motor hybrid can do 0-60 mph in 10.0 seconds and achieves fuel efficiency of 18 mpg vs. 10.6 seconds 0-60 mph and 16 mpg for the 5.9 liter gas-powered pickups. And because a smaller displacement internal combustion engine is used, emissions are lower.

The Dodge Ram Contractor Special hybrid is the most recent addition to DaimlerChrysler's fleet of clean, fuel efficient vehicles. In recent weeks, DaimlerChrysler has:

- Created a Hybrid Electric Vehicle Engineering platform.
- Revealed plans to produce and market in 2003 a hybrid electric version of the Dodge Durango SUV, with 20 percent improved fuel economy.
- Purchased Global Electric MotorCars, LLC (GEM) of Fargo, North Dakota, the largest U.S. producer of electric vehicles for use on public roads. DaimlerChrysler is the first major automaker to sell Neighborhood Electric Vehicles (NEVs) in the United States.

- Achieved sales of more than half a million alternate fuel vehicles in the past three years, including CNG and E85-powered vehicles.
- Unveiled the Jeep® Commander 2, a luxury SUV with a fuel cell-hybrid electric powertrain that achieves near-zero tailpipe emissions and up to double the fuel efficiency of a comparable gas-powered SUV.
- Delivered two versions of the NECAR 4 and the DaimlerChrysler NEBUS to the California Fuel Cell Partnership in Sacramento as part of a fuel cell vehicle demonstration program.
- Unveiled the fifth-generation fuel cell passenger car, the NECAR 5, using methanol in an advanced fuel cell powertrain.

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