

Another step forward for alternative fuels

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[Fuel Systems Solutions](#) used today's 50th anniversary celebration of Santa Ana-based subsidiary [IMPCO Technologies](#) to announce what it hopes will be a huge step forward in the green automotive movement.

The company said it will begin manufacturing for the North American market a system that converts gasoline engines into systems that can run on propane or natural gas.



IMPCO's bi-fuel systems will let engines run on either gasoline or propane, or gasoline or natural gas. By using propane or natural gas as the fuel of choice, the company says vehicles can reduce greenhouse gas emissions by 20 to 90 percent, while retaining about the same power as one gets using the traditional stuff.

While vehicles propelled by propane or natural gas are still relatively rare in the U.S., they're commonplace in Canada, Europe, South America and Australia, where millions of vehicles combined are powered by the stuff, the company said.

"It's more consumer-friendly in Canada," Richard Nielsen, general manager at IMPCO, said of our neighbor to the north. "In the U.S. we have a love affair with gasoline."

For IMPCO, creating vehicles that run on something other than gasoline isn't anything new. The company has been doing it for five decades now. In 1958, the start-up then known as Imperial Machine Products Co. sold its first liquid propane gas components for use in cars.

Nowadays it does about 800,000 conversions annually in non-U.S. markets. Now, as awareness over toxic emissions and the desire to wean ourselves off foreign oil is at a fervor, the company says it's the right time to bring its technology to the U.S. auto market.

Among the vehicles on display at today's event was a full-size Chevy Silverado converted to a bi-fuel system.



For now, the focus will be on converting fleet vehicles, Nielsen said, and then passenger cars down the line. The company also hopes it can help pave the way for more refueling stations.

As far as reserves, Nielsen says the U.S. has a more than ample supply.

“We have reserves of propane in the U.S.,” he said. “Enough to power every car here.”