

GM Returns To Building Electric Motors In-House

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DETROIT (AP) — General Motors Corp. is back in the electric motor business.

The automaker said Tuesday that starting in 2013, it plans to build its own electric motors for hybrid and electric vehicles. GM has been getting electric motors for those vehicles from suppliers, but wants to make the motors in-house in order to lower costs and improve quality and reliability.

"We need to not only buy the parts, we need to really understand them," said Pete Savagian, engineering director for hybrids and electric motors, in a conference call with reporters ahead of Tuesday's announcement.

GM wouldn't say where it will build the electric motors, but it scheduled a news conference Tuesday afternoon at its Baltimore Transmission plant in White Marsh, Md. The plant currently makes hybrid transmissions. GM said it will invest more than \$246 million to build the electric motors. It wouldn't say how many motors it will build.

This isn't the first time GM has built electric motors. It built them for its EV1 electric car in the mid-1990s, and some of the engineers of that car worked on the new motors, Savagian said. Savagian said GM has been quietly developing a new electric motor since 2003, and will be the first U.S.-based automaker to manufacture its own.

GM-designed and built electric motors will debut in 2013 on rear-wheel-drive, two-mode hybrid vehicles, but eventually they could be placed in all-electric and fuel-cell cars.

Two-mode hybrids use a motor alongside a conventional engine to boost power and improve fuel-efficiency. Electric vehicles are powered solely by batteries and electric motors, while in fuel-cell vehicles, an electric motor is powered by a reaction between oxygen and hydrogen.

On traditional vehicles, gas fuels the engine and transmission, which power the wheels. On electric vehicles, batteries replace fuel and electric motors replace the engine and transmission.

Tom Stephens, GM's vice chairman of global product operations, said using energy from the electric grid is the best way to cut emissions and reliance on oil in the short term.

"We do need to have the electrification of the automobile," he said.

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