

Chrysler To Sell Natural Gas-Powered Truck

The Associated Press

DETROIT (AP) — Chrysler aims to be the first U.S. automaker to produce a factory-built pickup truck that is powered mainly by natural gas.

The privately held company said Tuesday that its new Ram 2500 Heavy Duty CNG truck will be sold to commercial customers that operate truck fleets. The company expects to deliver the first trucks in July.

The truck will have natural gas tanks and an 8-gallon fuel tank for gasoline. Chrysler said a small amount of gasoline is needed to start the truck, but after ignition it runs entirely on natural gas. If the natural gas tanks run out, the engine can switch to gasoline.

Natural gas prices have dropped steeply over the last year thanks to higher production. Chrysler said the gas-powered trucks will save money for their owners over the long term.

Other automakers are moving into the natural gas market.

On Monday, General Motors Co. said it would release two 2013-model pickup trucks powered in part by natural gas. The company said it would start taking orders in April for the natural gas-powered 2013 Chevrolet Silverado and GMC Sierra 2500 HD.

GM said it expects to ship its vehicles toward the end of the year. The trucks will be available to both commercial fleet operators and retail customers.

Chrysler said its truck will have a 5.7-liter HEMI V-8 engine. The pickup will have a driving range of about 255 miles on natural gas alone. The backup supply of gasoline boosts the range to 367 miles. Chrysler said it expects commercial customers like public utilities and telephone repair crews to buy the trucks for their fleets.

GM said its trucks will run on a Vortec 6.0L V-8 engine that uses both natural gas and gasoline. The trucks will have a total range of about 650 miles using both fuels, the company said.

Source URL (retrieved on 07/25/2014 - 7:44am):

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