

# Women more inclined to go green

## Volt creating lots of buzz

BY BAL BRACH, CANWEST NEWS SERVICE MAY 15, 2009



Sandra Turley-Ewart enjoyed her test drive in a 2008 Chevrolet Tahoe Hybrid. From left to right, Sabine Buck-Egger, Sandra Turley-Ewart, Phil Egger, and Linde Buck.

**Photograph by:** National Post, Canwest News Service

Women are turning to more eco-friendly vehicles this fall, according to an automotive expert, as the range of models and features expands.

"Women are looking to be more green," says Jody DeVere, president of the Women's Automotive Association International. "Women are going to be looking for those models where they're going to help the environment and get the best fuel economy."

DeVere, who offers automotive advice for women on the website Askpatty.com, says hybrids and fuel-cell vehicles are now the most desirable choice for women on the road. DeVere says manufacturers are changing gears and introducing more fuel-efficient vehicles to consumers in the wake of the summer's record high gas prices. "I think fuel economy is going to drive a lot of car buying decisions from now on," she said. "Vehicles getting over 30 miles per gallon are definitely going to be preferred in all classes."

The all-electric Chevrolet Volt from General Motors is creating the most buzz among women car buyers, according to DeVere. "There is a lot of excitement and anticipation of having an all-electric vehicle choice." She said the Volt generated the most enthusiasm among a panel of female automotive experts. "The battery pack will take the vehicle 40 miles, which is the typical range of drive for most families." Production on the plug-in hybrid series is expected to begin in 2010.

For those looking to buy now, DeVere lists the Ford Escape Hybrid SUV as a top choice for families going green. "I think women are looking at crossover vehicles because it gives them the seating room," said DeVere. The Hybrid remains one of the most efficient small SUV's on today's market. "It's a good choice for a compact SUV with best-in-class hybrid city economy." For comfortable luxury in an SUV, she also recommends the new Ford Flex SUV which has relatively good fuel economy for its segment.

DeVere said Askpatty.com has seen a huge increase in the demand for articles and content related to fuel-efficient vehicles, and she expects Chevy's Malibu Hybrid sedan to be another popular vehicle with female buyers. "It has the best overall feel, economy and price in a green sedan environment."

Japanese manufacturer Nissan will likely also have more females behind the wheels of the Versa, she says. "It's highly ranked among small cars for its comfort, features, price and performance."

For women looking for class and luxury, the Cadillac CTS — voted 2008 Motor Trend Car of the Year — will not disappoint. "It's pure indulgence on every level," said DeVere. "Women are just as passionate about their vehicles as men are."

Karen Jamison couldn't agree more. "There's so many myths about women and cars like we don't know how to drive or don't care about cars. We do care about that stuff just like men," says Jamison, who was once a partner in a dealership catering to women called Clutch by Auto One.

She says women are often neglected at the dealership level. "Not only do they buy more cars than men, they also influence over 80 per cent of the car-purchasing decisions made," Jamison said. Jamison continues to sell vehicles and many of her clients are women. "Women are super-savvy buyers . . . they really do their homework before they come in to buy."

DeVere says it might take a woman up to 17 weeks to decide on the vehicle she wants to purchase. She says the lengthy process is based in common female shopping habits. "When you go out and buy a dress, you usually try on three or four. You want one that fits your lifestyle and your personality and this is how we shop for vehicles as well."

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