

Commentary...

Choosing an electric car is not about battery recycling

By Steve Nugent
Guest Columnist

After reading the well-written electric car article by Ethan Ferwalt, I realized that the article was actually about lithium-ion battery toxicity, hazards, and lack of recycling and should not be interpreted as: “electric vehicles are bad.” I also found it ironic that directly under the article was an ad for a LI battery chainsaw.

LI battery-powered devices, including laptops, tablets, cell phones, power tools, drones, toothbrushes and shavers have been in use for well over a decade, and these are generally not recycled. More and more devices use these batteries every day, including power generation and solar roofs, so recycling is imperative. There has never been a LI battery explosion reported in an electric vehicle, only a few accident-caused fires that usually allow the passengers to exit without harm.

LI batteries are the current mass-produced battery, but they are not state-of-the-art by any stretch. There are many safer, more efficient and non-toxic technologies already being demonstrated worldwide in labs. Bringing to market any of these new battery technologies will take decades, but I believe that a safer, more efficient, longer-lasting replacement will come, making the LI battery of today obsolete before the landfills are full.

Ethan talks about the CO2 emissions reduction possible by transitioning to fully electric vehicles. The

CO2 emissions from every car go into the upper atmosphere and stay there for up to 1,000 years. Global warming is the result. Global warming is already having severe impacts on the U.S. and world economy, causing extinction of species all over the globe and increasing human deaths from weather disasters and air pollution (particularly due to carcinogenic diesel fumes). Every one of us pays the price in taxes and increased prices on goods and insurance caused by these weather disasters. There are more deaths in the U.S. due to air pollution from diesel and gas cars than from auto accidents.

The choice is simple: enable safe recycling of LI batteries or continue driving gas cars, allowing climate change to destroy what is left of the reefs in the oceans, millions of acres of forest, make millions of acres of farmland unusable for farming or ranching, eliminate most of the wild fish we eat and force mass human migrations that will cause significantly more wars and human suffering worldwide.

To understand how CO2 causes global warming, a balance scale analogy is useful. On one tray of the scale are the CO2 generators and on the other tray are the CO2 absorbers. As long as these are in balance, equilibrium will exist and CO2 will not accumulate. Before the industrial age, humans, animals and forest fires were the CO2 emitters on one side and oceans, trees and grasslands were the CO2

absorbers on the other side. Now, the CO2 emitters also include power plants and cars as well as increased human population and the livestock to support them. The CO2 absorbing side has shrunk as forests have been cut/burned for ranching and farming. The resulting imbalance has caused accumulation of CO2 in the lower atmosphere. The greenhouse effect that results is causing more wildfires, melting ice-caps that no longer reflect solar radiation and thawing permafrost that releases NO2, causing the imbalance to accelerate.

Fossil fuels are an existential threat to the human race. In 2017, the combination of wildfires, extreme heat, drought, hurricanes, snowstorms, floods and tornadoes cost the U.S. more than \$300 billion. Already in 2018, the East Coast has experienced four severe nor’easters in two weeks, with flooding and hundreds of thousands without power. Anyone that believes that rural areas are not affected except for maybe wildfires is simply mistaken. This is not about ocean levels rising and impacting native Alaskans or African nations suffering through droughts. Climatologists now have analytical tools that calculate the portion of each disaster caused by global warming, so this is not speculation.

Fossil-fuel-fired power plants are not the only significant CO2 emitter. Vehicles in the U.S. create emissions roughly equal to the emissions of all U.S. power plants. Power plant

emissions are decreasing in the U.S. due to actions taken by Obama. Vehicle CO2 emissions, on the other hand, continue to increase, despite improvements in vehicle MPG. This is due to the slow transition to hybrids and electrics, the desire for larger vehicles and by the wasteful behavior of the U.S. population and businesses. This waste includes: unnecessary trips; little carpooling; idling engines in parking lots while using a cell-phone; at the post office; waiting for road construction/trains; and business vehicles idling all day long for no reason. Why is the U.S. so slow to recognize the threat and make serious changes as all other developed countries have done?

• It’s not my problem attitude of some people – they are not good local or global citizens

• The weather here is fine, even cold: Weather is NOT climate, look it up

• Jobs are more important than preserving natural resources and biodiversity

• No political will of the government to act because it is controlled by big oil

• Ignorance

We will still need petroleum products, but we will all be driving electric cars in the future. Power generation will eventually be clean. The question is whether this will happen in time to save the human race and the biodiversity on this planet. Choosing an electric car now is a good start.

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Thurs	Tomato Rice	Mon.....Chicken Barley
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