



*Washington Report:*

**POWERED BY PAPER**

Batteries made of cellulose (mostly paper) have been developed at Rensselaer Polytechnic Institute in New York. The breakthrough came from work being done on developing membranes for kidney dialysis machines. When researchers mixed in some nanotubes, they

were surprised to find battery and a super capacitor. When they combined the two devices, they found they had the perfect combination for powering a vehicle, capable of both storing and quickly releasing power. Talk about a lightweight battery! Who knows, this could be the breakthrough the carmakers have been waiting for to make electric vehicles viable. Obviously a great deal of work has to be done.

**LIQUID COAL**

Liquid coal vehicle fuel? We have huge reserves in the US and Canada, and it is relatively cheap. The conversion technology dates back to the Germans in World War II. Liquid coal can be used to run diesel powered vehicles. The industry says it is cost competitive when oil exceeds \$50 a barrel. So why don't we hear more about it? The big problem is the amount of carbon dioxide pro-

duced in the processing and burning of the coal. It is much more than converting oil into fuels. It just does not appear to make sense at this time. The coal industry is working on ways to get rid of the carbon dioxide without it going into the atmosphere.

**CHARGE IT**

Leave it to California. West Hollywood and Beverly Hills are installing 30 high-tech parking meters that accept credit cards. For traditionalists, the meters will still accept coins - lots of coins. The meters are powered by solar cells and communicate the credit card information via cell phone technology. They even call for help if they are jammed or being attacked by an unhappy motorist. They require less service than coin collection since most people use credit cards.

*Source: Import Automotive Parts & Accessories Magazine*

**Top-Selling Light Trucks Show Shifts in Vehicle Choice**



During the first four months of 2008, pickup sales have dropped 17% compared to the same time period last year. The specialty equipment industry has long revered the pickup segment as opportunities for profits due to its growth in the past, but hikes in gasoline prices have taken a toll on recent sales.

AutoPacific, an automotive industry consulting firm, predicts that small or compact pickups will drop to 503,300 units sold for 2008, a decrease of 8% from 2007. Large-pickup sales will endure an even more drastic decline of 20%, according to forecasts, ending 2008 with about 1,700,300 units sold. Overall, pickup sales will drop 18% in 2008, according to AutoPacific data.

In addition to declining pickup sales, SUV sales have also dropped compared to last year. During the first four months of this year, overall sales have dropped 27%, and total sales are forecasted to decline 25% in 2008 compared to last year.

Pickups and SUVs have become a mainstream vehicle choice for consumers not necessarily in need of the towing and hauling capabilities that these trucks provide. However, as the U.S. economy experiences a downturn due, in part, to high gas prices, consumers have shifted their buying preferences. While drivers still seek the family hauling capabilities and utility of pickups and SUVs, they now find similar attributes in CUVs, which also offer improved fuel economy and handling compared to their body-on-frame counterparts.

*Source: SEMA Market Research*

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