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## Hybrid trucks try to gain traction

### High prices scare away smaller companies

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Convincing private companies to pay more for a hybrid utility truck with the promise of saving money in the long run is proving to be a tough sell.

Lakeside International Trucks heard from the city of Milwaukee and We Energies about the International DuraStar Hybrid trucks, but, so far, the company received little response from private companies, said Todd Soczka, fleet account executive for Lakeside, which has dealerships in Milwaukee and Janesville. He noted the company is just starting to promote the product.

The trucks cost about \$40,000 more than a standard truck, Soczka said, and that gives some customers sticker shock. Lakeside's selling point is that, through savings in gas and on maintenance, hybrids can save owners that much money in about five or seven years, he said.

The dealers also promote federal Environmental Protection Agency grants that can shave anywhere from \$1,000 to \$12,000 from the price of a truck.

The trucks have lithium-ion batteries that store power when the trucks brake, and they use the battery instead of gas when the truck accelerates. The brakes are billed as more durable than those on a standard utility truck and only will need replacement once or twice in the life of the truck, Soczka said.

"We like to look at it in terms of 'it doesn't cost you anything,'" he said. "There's so many intangibles in terms of the maintenance side of things."

Hybrids also enable crews to turn the engine off when workers are using the boom in the back.

We Energies spokesman Brian Manthey said hybrids could help utility crews working at night cut down on engine noise, which would disturb residents less. Workers on the ground could communicate with others in the bucket without yelling over engine noise, too.

The utility won't be buying new trucks until next year, Manthey said, and it's looking at the numbers to see if the hybrids are worth the extra up-front investment.

"We're looking at the possibility of adding them to the fleet in the future," Manthey said. "Obviously fuel savings is a large part of that."