

## St. Lucie sheriff installs gas-saver as test on patrol cars

By Will Greenlee

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ST. LUCIE COUNTY — It sounds like something from "The Jetsons," but it could save fuel, and in turn, cash for the St. Lucie County Sheriff's Office.

Larry Melton, a sheriff's office mechanic, jimmied around under the hood of a patrol car Thursday to install a device known as the Hydro-4000, which is supposed to increase gas mileage by using distilled water to create hydrogen gas. Introduced into the air drawn into the engine, the hydrogen reportedly makes gasoline or diesel burn more efficiently.

"If this produces the results that we think it will, we will put this on every vehicle we have," said Sheriff Ken Mascara. "I think the cost of gas never reached the point where people said, 'Hey, we have to do something,' and now it's at that point."

The Hydro-4000, about the size of a football, comes from Jupiter-based Green Machine Solutions Inc. and is advertised as reducing fuel consumption by 20 to 60 percent.

A subsidiary of Diversified Energy Group, Green Machine Solutions was launched in February and focuses on reusable energy and alternative fuels.

David Havanich Jr., 42, president of the companies, said a Hydro-4000 has increased the mileage of his Ford F-250 turbo diesel truck by 4 miles per gallon on the highway and 2 mpg in the city.

The device also reduces emissions by helping vehicles burn almost 100 percent of their fuel, Havanich said, adding that slightly more than 300 Hydro-4000s and Hydro-5000s, for heavy equipment and tractor trailers, have been sold.

Mascara said confiscated drug money was used to buy two of the \$1,200 units for about a month of testing. Melton installed one in a Ford Crown Victoria used by a deputy who averages about 200 miles per eight-hour shift patrolling western areas of the county.

"We figure if we get the increased miles per gallon that we anticipate with this application," Mascara said, "this will pay for itself in about six weeks."

A similar vehicle driven by Maj. Patrick Tighe, warden of the St. Lucie County Jail, will have a unit installed for testing.

Mascara said his agency has about 425 vehicles, about 350 of which could be

candidates for the Hydro-4000.

The sheriff's office consumes about 8,000 gallons of fuel a week and in recent years has tried to move to more fuel efficient vehicles, such as the Ford Taurus and Honda Civic, for some personnel.

"This is one more thing we're attempting to do," Mascara said.

Mascara said the Ford Crown Victoria, a staple patrol vehicle, averages about 18 miles per gallon.

"If we can get to 25 or 26, that would be absolutely awesome," he said.



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