

NEW WHEELS

Vectren unveils new squad of hybrid bucket trucks



Carl Chapman, president and chief operating officer, said Vectren now has about 20 hybrid vehicles in its fleet. They include the Toyota Prius, Ford Escape and Chevy Malibu.

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Reduced noise and pollution are the promised benefits of new bucket trucks Vectren Corp. introduced Wednesday.

The trucks are hybrids, meaning they run on both standard diesel fuel and electricity from a lithium battery. Vectren has added five of them to its fleet of about 900 vehicles. A sixth truck is on the way.

Some of the new trucks' chief benefits will be seen when they are parked and their mechanical booms are being used in repairing damaged electrical wires. With older bucket trucks, the diesel engine had to be kept running at such times.

The hybrids, though, will mainly use their batteries to power the booms' movements, said Dave Hatfield, a Vectren line specialist. That eliminates the noise of run-

ning diesel engines. And it should lower the trucks' emissions by 75 percent.

Hatfield said the trucks' batteries can power the booms for about 45 minutes. When they run low, the diesel engine turns on and recharges them in about seven minutes.

Another advantage: The trucks don't draw on batteries at times when the booms are extended but not moving. With the older trucks, the engines had to be kept running whenever the booms were in use.

The trucks were made by International Truck and Engine Corp. and Eaton Corp. They cost about \$180,000 each, which is about \$40,000 more than a standard truck, according to Carl Chapman, Vectren president and chief operating officer.

The hybrids are expected to last at least 10 years. Using their batteries will save between 1,000 and 1,500 gallons of fuel a year

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