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A Basic Overview of Fuel Cell Technology. by [Hiteshbhoi](#)

Article published on January 3rd 2012 | [Auto](#)

Are you tired of high priced gasoline for your car? Or perhaps worried about the environment? For years, scientists have been working on an energy alternative that holds promises to change the way we live by changing the source of fuel for some of our most basic energy-using engines. This new technology in progress is called a fuel cell. A fuel cell supplies a DC (direct current) voltage that can be used to power motors, lights, or any number of electrical appliances.

The technical name for a fuel cell is an electrochemical energy conversion device. A fuel cell converts the chemicals hydrogen and oxygen into water, and in the process it produces electricity. Other electrochemical devices that are in use these days and for many decades is the well-known battery. The distinguishing difference between a simple battery and a fuel cell is that all the chemicals are stored inside the battery. The battery in turn converts those chemicals into electricity but in due course it "goes dead" as the chemicals are used up and at times you can either throw it away or recharge it.

Then again with a fuel cell, chemicals continually flow into the cell so as long as there is a flow of chemicals into the cell; the electricity flows out of the fuel cell. Combustion engines the gasoline engine burn fuels and batteries converted chemical energy back into electrical energy when needed. However, fuel cells should do both tasks more efficiently.

Simply put the construction and materials in a fuel cell release electrons from the hydrogen gas creating electricity and the waste product after the electricity is used to power an electrical device is water, formed with the negative hydrogen and the oxygen. This reaction in a single fuel cell produces only about 0.7 volts. To get this voltage up to a reasonable level, several separate fuel cells must be combined to form a fuel-cell stack.

However one major problem with using hydrogen is that it cannot be stored easily for consumer use. Among the other alternatives, it could be natural gas, propane, and methanol gas. The main objective of using fuel cell technology is pollution reduction. Fuel cell is also very efficient; 80% of the fuel use in these cells is converted into usable energy as compared to only 20% for a gasoline powered engine and about 30% overall for a battery powered electric vehicle.

Evidently there is no question that the fuel cell holds greater promise for the future. However, the fuel cell technology must still gather all the pieces of finding the right 'fuel' source that is both easy to store and deliver to the consumer, efficiency of the vehicle using fuel cells, and the cost for the total package.

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Article Keywords:

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