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Dow Chemical plans to phase in fuel-efficient auto fleet

BY ALEX KELLOGG • FREE PRESS STAFF WRITER • JULY 2, 2008

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Dow Chemical is developing a fleet conversion program to cut its energy costs.

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The plan calls for a more rigorous process of tracking fuel consumption from the company's 3,000-vehicle North American fleet and the gradual conversion of that fleet to smaller, more fuel-efficient [cars](#).

The conversion will include downsizing SUVs to smaller [vehicles](#) and eventually using hybrids.

"We have not switched over anything yet," spokesman David Winder said

Tuesday. "Everything is still being evaluated and discussed."

The fleet conversion comes as energy costs have pummeled the Midland-based manufacturer. Dow expects to spend at least \$32 billion on energy and oil derivatives for raw materials -- a four-fold increase from 2002, Winder said.

"That has been staggering to us," he said.

In the last two months, Dow has announced major price increases across the board to offset skyrocketing energy costs. "They use a ton of energy," said Scott Watkins, a senior [consultant](#) at Anderson Economic Group, an East Lansing-based economic consulting company.

Watkins said Tuesday he has seen anecdotal evidence that other Michigan companies are using more fuel-efficient vehicles as they face a similar financial pinch.

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"I would expect that there will be a long parade of companies moving to more fuel-efficient vehicles," he said.

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