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Military bases test fuel-cell technology

Prabha Natarajan
Pacific Business News

Demonstration fuel cells installed at defense stations at Pearl Harbor, [Marine Corps](#) Base Hawaii and Schofield Barracks will test the viability of alternative energy sources.

The one-year test installation at the military bases is part of a nationwide effort, mandated and funded by Congress, to explore emissionless power production to meet the needs of the U.S. Department of Defense. It also could become another source of contracts, worth millions of dollars, for local energy companies.

Fuel cells, each with a capacity to produce 5 kilowatts of power, were installed at the bases earlier this month by a Hawaii company, Energy Industries LLC. The estimated \$150,000 system will produce power, and heat released as a result will be used to heat water.

"The system will allow us to reuse more of the energy we pay for," said Keith Saito, energy manager for Navy Region Hawaii. "We are looking at how feasible, economical and efficient the system is."

Saito had a fuel cell installed at his office building, called Building 166 at Pearl Harbor Naval Station. The 53,000-square-foot, two-story building is home to workshops, warehouses and offices that support the Navy. Its round-the-clock operations generate an annual energy bill of \$54,000 .

He acknowledged that the energy produced from the demonstration fuel cell, presently 2.5 kilowatts, will not contribute much to its average daily consumption of 1,000 kilowatts. About 2.5 kilowatts are needed to power a home.

"We are participating because we are trying to figure out how efficient these machines can be," he said.

The system should be at least 70 percent to 80 percent efficient to be commercially feasible.

Energy Industries, the local contractor handling the demonstrations, will keep track of production and consumption of propane that will fuel the cell, said company President



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"After a year we will do a post-mortem on the product to see how it reacted," he said.

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