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Hawaii gov. test-drives alternate fuel vehicles

GOLDEN, Colo. (AP) -- Hawaii Gov. Linda Lingle on Friday test-drove some alternative fuel vehicles that will be evaluated at the U.S. Department of Energy's National Renewable Energy Laboratory here.

Lingle was joined at the lab by Colorado Gov. Bill Ritter and Alexander Karsner, assistant secretary for energy efficiency and renewable energy.

They previewed 18 electric cars and trucks that will help visitors to the lab learn about advanced vehicle technologies that are available or in development. The vehicles - made by such companies as Ford, Honda and Hyundai - included those fueled by electricity, hydrogen, ethanol and biodiesel.

Many of the vehicles feature promising technologies designed to increase efficiency without sacrificing safety or comfort, lab officials said.

Lingle drove a plug-in hybrid Ford Escape, which recharges from the utility grid, so it can travel more miles on electricity alone than a conventional hybrid-electric car.

The department invited Lingle as part the Hawaii Clean Energy Initiative, a public-private partnership formed in January to move toward having 70 percent of Hawaii's energy come from clean energy sources by 2030, her office said.

While in Colorado, Lingle participated in a regulatory training workshop led by national experts on utility regulation. The session was held to inform and equip Hawaii regulators with the tools and options to develop the regulatory framework needed to enable the state to achieve its renewable energy goals.

Lingle started her trip in Nassau, Bahamas, where she attended a one-day conference focusing on developing renewable energy solutions for island nations, states and territories.

The conference featured announcement of an international partnership for energy development in island nations. The goal is to facilitate the development and deployment of clean energy technologies that utilize indigenous renewable energy resources and reduce dependence on fossil fuels.

The partnership's founding members include New Zealand, Iceland and the U.S., with the Department of Energy coordinating Hawaii's involvement as the representative state for America, Lingle's office said.

Lingle was slated to return to Hawaii on Saturday.

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