



This article first released by: Saab

In: Sep. 2005

*Due to this article's content, it appears within the Transport section in the following areas:
Bioethanol, Manufacturers, Industry Comment.*

Saab BioPower Receives Avis Backing with 400-car Fleet



Car rental giant Avis is the first customer in Sweden to take delivery of Swedish premium brand Saab's new 'eco-friendly' 9-5 2.0t BioPower model, which cuts fossil carbon dioxide (CO₂) emissions by running on bioethanol.

The delivery of the first batch of 200 cars was completed in August and Avis is to purchase a further 200 BioPowers in the autumn. The Avis cars are part of growing 2,500-strong BioPower order intake from Saab dealers in Sweden as customers queue up to enjoy the benefits of the

new model.

Saab is leading the premium segment by offering a car that runs on bioethanol, a renewable fuel produced in Sweden and other countries from agricultural crops and forest by-products. Unlike petrol, the consumption of bioethanol does not raise atmospheric levels of carbon dioxide, which research suggests is the 'greenhouse gas' that contributes to global warming. This is because the emissions released during driving are balanced by the amount of CO₂ removed from the atmosphere when crops are grown for conversion to bioethanol.

Avis says that it was especially attracted by the user practicality of the 9-5 BioPower model, because it can also run on petrol, or any mixture of bioethanol and petrol up to a blend of 85 per cent, without adjustment. While the availability of E85 fuel (85 per cent ethanol/15 per cent petrol) at filling stations throughout Sweden is already widespread, the flexibility of the Saab 9-5 BioPower means that customers can still fill up with petrol if necessary.

"This is a very smart solution and we are delighted to offer a car that so conveniently meets the environmental needs of our customers, the majority of whom are business users," says Hans Larsson, Director of Procurement at Avis Sweden.

"The Saab 9-5 BioPower meets two key priorities for our company, environmental concern and safety," he explained.



"For the first time, business and leisure customers wanting a premium-class car can now rent one that has regard for the environment in a simple way. Bioethanol is a renewable resource that we produce here in Sweden from our crops and forestry, and there is an expanding infrastructure in place already supplying it.

"The flexibility of the Saab 9-5 BioPower also makes it far more practical to use when compared to some hybrid and CNG (compressed natural gas)-powered cars we have tried, which have restricted ranges or fuel supply complications. "The fact that E85 fuel for the Saab BioPower is currently 40 per cent cheaper at the pumps than petrol is a major financial benefit for our customers. All Saab 9-5 BioPower users are also exempt from paying city congestion charges.

"Saab already has an outstanding reputation for safety and we are pleased to see that the Saab 9-5 has again been named Sweden's safest car in the latest Folksam survey. As a company, Avis benefits from reduced insurance premiums as a result of the Saab 9-5's low injury claims record."

Operating a fleet of Saab 9-5 BioPower Saloon and Estate cars will also help Avis meet its ISO 14001 environmental standards, a requirement shared by many of the companies who employ Avis customers.

The first 120 cars of the Avis fleet - carrying a discrete 'Saab BioPower with Avis' decal above the fuel filler flap - are now in place at Avis' main Stockholm office and the company plans to have the 9-5 BioPower available for rental throughout its 120 branch national network. All cars will be fitted with integrated, hands-free Sony Ericsson Bluetooth telephones, for increased driving safety, and engine block heaters, for quick warm up and improved fuel consumption when cold.

"We are delighted to welcome Avis as our first Saab BioPower customer," says Bengt Nilemo, Managing Director of General Motors Sweden. "We already have an extremely large order book for this car, which clearly makes a lot of sense for both environmental and financial reasons.

"The development of this engine also says a lot about the values of the Saab brand because the driver can enjoy having 20 per cent more engine power when using E85, as well as being kinder to the environment."



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