

Press release

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Palladium use in diesel emission control systems for cars now a reality

Umicore today announced the introduction of new technology that will enable the use of palladium as a catalyst in diesel emission control systems for passenger cars. Until now platinum has been the only material capable of fulfilling this function. This breakthrough is the result of significant research and development undertaken by Umicore's Automotive Catalyst division.

Umicore is ready to introduce a new diesel oxidation catalyst technology which will at this stage enable the replacement of approximately one quarter of current platinum loadings by palladium. This development has been facilitated by the increasing availability of low-sulphur diesel fuel and the sophistication of modern engine management systems.

This new technology developed by Umicore will provide automobile manufacturers with a degree of flexibility in their choice of catalyst materials for diesel emission control systems. This is an important consideration, especially at times when there is a wide divergence in the price of platinum and palladium, as is currently the case. In this context, Umicore's development opens the way for automobile manufacturers to reduce the total cost of diesel passenger car emission control systems.

The technology also offers added scope for broader and faster introduction of catalytically activated diesel particulate filters (DPFs) in the market. Catalyzed DPFs reduce the emissions of small particles from diesel engines. DaimlerChrysler introduced the world's first catalyzed DPF to the market in 2003 in co-operation with Umicore.

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PROFILE

Umicore is an international metals and materials group. Its activities are centred on five business areas : Precious Metals Services, Precious Metals Products and Catalysts, Advanced Materials, Zinc and Copper. Each business area is divided into market-focused business units.

Umicore focuses on application areas where it knows its expertise in materials science, chemistry and metallurgy can make a real difference, be it in products that are essential to everyday life or those at the cutting edge of exciting, new technological developments.

Umicore's overriding goal of sustainable value creation is based on this ambition to develop, produce and recycle metals in a way that fulfils its mission: materials for a better life.

The Umicore Group has industrial operations on all continents and serves a global customer base; it generated a turnover of EUR 4.7 billion in 2003 and currently employs some 11,500 people.