Service Profile

Electric Vehicles

UGL Services has been a pioneer in sustainable facility management services from the beginning. Starting with its UGL Services GreenClean® program in 2004, the first comprehensive green cleaning regimen introduced by a Building Service Contractor (BSC), UGL Services continues to lead the industry. One of its latest initiatives is the introduction of Neighborhood Electric Vehicles (NEVs) to its campus-based accounts, such as educational institutions and commercial companies. Here again, UGL Services is the first BSC to actively advocate for NEVs at its customer sites.

UGL Services Purchasing and Operations joined together to research and select a NEV supplier. In researching possible solutions, John Kennedy, UGL Services Vice President of Operations Support found e-ride Industries, a manufacturer of all-electric utility vehicles.

E-ride NEVs have ranges of 55 to 60 miles on a single charge with recharging times of about eight hours. E-ride's models, the EXV2 (two passenger) and EXV4 (four passenger) can be ordered in a multitude of configurations for use in corporate or campus settings by security departments, facility maintenance or trade service groups.

NEIGHBORHOOD ELECTRIC VEHICLES

NEV is a vehicle classification by the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration. It defines the vehicle as a four-wheel vehicle that has a top speed of 20 to 25 mph and weighs less than 2,500 lbs. They are street legal on roads with posted speed limits of less than 35 mph.

NEVs are practical vehicles for many campus-based facility services applications, such as maintenance or landscaping, since vehicles travel short distances and spend a lot of time either parked or idling. Yet, they are large and powerful enough to haul heavy loads, tow trailers and perform other tasks that are typical of conventional gas-powered pickup trucks.

Greg Zifcak, UGL Services Purchasing Program Manager, visited the e-ride factory in Princeton, Minnesota to meet the principals, including e-ride Founder and Owner John Herou, to learn more about their electric utility vehicles. He was impressed with the manufacturing quality, the overall ruggedness of the chassis and body as well as e-ride's innovative approach to mechanical design.

The e-ride team accomplished the difficult task of designing multi-purpose vehicles that have specially-designed braking, battery charging and other systems but still use off-the-shelf parts. For instance, e-ride worked with Interstate Batteries to power the vehicles with batteries that can be ordered through any of its distributors. Similarly, virtually all components, such as tires, rims, electrical and mechanical components, are widely available in the aftermarket through auto parts stores.

After touring the plant, Zifcak conducted an extensive test drive and determined that the e-ride vehicles would be a viable sustainability option for many of UGL Services' large corporate and education customers.

Following the inspection trip, Kennedy and Zifcak developed the specifications that UGL Services would require and Zifcak negotiated two versions of the e-ride vehicles to meet the company's operational needs. They then invited e-ride to the UGL Services Sustainability Tradeshow in Washington, DC in April 2010. Herou and his team brought two specially-configured vehicles that were shown to UGL Services operations staff attendees, as well as invited customers.

Also at the show, UGL Services announced a $5,000 grant towards the purchase of the first e-ride unit to be deployed at a customer site.

The University of Miami was able to take advantage of the grant in late 2010 to replace a conventional pickup truck used for trash removal on its medical campus. The NEV is ideal for the application since it eliminates engine idle time/pollution. The EXV2, outfitted with a screen cage in the truck bed, is projected to save more than $5,500 per year and further reduce the carbon footprint on the campus by eliminating 20,000 pounds of CO^2 per year. Maintenance is also considerably lower because the new vehicle is replacing a complex, multi-component gas engine that would require frequent maintenance.

Since the first vehicle at the University, UGL Services has introduced the NEV to other accounts. An Ivy League college is using two e-rides, an EXV2 and an EXV4, for maintenance work on one of its campuses. The vehicles are equipped with toolboxes and ladder racks and are constantly deployed around the campus.

UGL Services recently deployed 10 e-ride vehicles at a Fortune 500 life sciences company where they are being used for maintenance on three of the company's California campuses. The vehicles are assigned to UGL Services engineering, maintenance and crafts people.

"We expect to introduce NEVs to several more customers in the coming months," said Zifcak. "They are working out well and since they cost about the same as conventional pickup trucks and have lower running and maintenance costs, they have a faster payback."