

PLUS

- Benefits of ductwork in conditioned spaces, page 57
- Stats from an ultra-efficient home, page 61

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Hedgewood Properties crafts quality homes with irresistible curb appeal and undeniable performance.
page 32

Hedgewood's Vickery neighborhood in North Atlanta

INSIDE:

Got water? The story behind the water crisis,
page 26

Goodbye, gas-guzzling work trucks; hello, eco-alternative vehicles,
page 38

St. Louis VISION House shows sustainability and style, page 44

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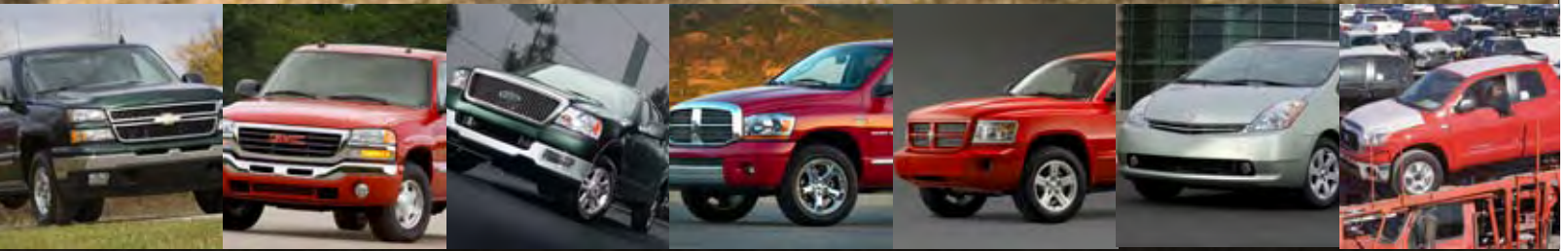
August 2007 www.greenbuildermag.com

By Joe Bousquin

THIS IS NOT YOUR FATHER'S PICKUP



**AUTO MANUFACTURERS EXPAND
ALTERNATIVE, FLEX-FUEL, AND HYBRID VEHICLE CHOICES.**



Matt Plaskoff, owner of Tarzana, Calif.-based One Week Bath, knew his company was impacting the environment more than it should. With a business model based on tearing out and fully remodeling clients' bathrooms in one week, Plaskoff's workers loaded materials for a job into a large, roll-up door truck each Monday. Then, they'd drive that truck—with its gas-guzzling,

eight-cylinder engine—back and forth between the warehouse and the client's home each day until the job was done.

"Our guys were taking these huge trucks and driving them heavy to the jobsite every day," Plaskoff says. "We figured there had to be a better way." After brainstorming with COO Troy Grande, Plaskoff decided they'd be better



Chevrolet Silverado and GMC Sierra Hybrid Pickups

With its Chevy Silverado and GMC Sierra, GM is the only major manufacturer to offer gas-electric hybrid pickup trucks. For 2007, though, both trucks were “mild” hybrids that leaned more on their gasoline engines than their electric motors for power. In 2008, the company will roll out updated “two-mode” versions of both trucks, meaning the vehicles will benefit from their electric motors on the highway as well as at low speeds or while sitting in traffic. GM claims the trucks’ overall power won’t be noticeably different for builders, though it concedes towing capacity is reduced to about 6,200 pounds from 7,200 pounds in its traditional gasoline models. Fuel efficiency should benefit, though, since the vehicles’ electric motors will switch on while going up hills without downshifting. “You can accelerate, and you won’t see the engine RPMs go up because you’re actually pulling that extra power out of the batteries instead of the fuel tank,” says Tom Hughes, GM’s Yukon product manager.—J.B.



off delivering materials just once, in pod-like trailers that they could leave at jobsites at the beginning of the week. Workers would be able to keep all materials and tools on site, while avoiding the back-and-forth trips. “Now, we’re saving at least \$500 a week in fuel,” Grande says.

By taking those bigger trucks off the road, they’re also helping preserve air quality and contributing fewer emissions to L.A.’s smog problem. Now, workers go directly to jobsites in smaller vehicles, such as the company’s Ford Focus, or its pair of Ford Rangers, with their smaller, V6 engines. The company is now considering going even greener by adding the Toyota Prius hybrid to its fleet.

“Of course, we started with the selfish reason, from a business standpoint, of wanting to save money on fuel,”

Plaskoff says. “But it also helps in terms of the environment. Sustainable building isn’t just about using recycled countertops. It’s about how you run your business, too.”

Flexible Options

In the construction industry, running a business invariably means operating big vehicles that are anything but models of fuel efficiency and low emissions. While the hauling requirements of your job mean you’ll likely still need some gas guzzlers in your fleet, you can augment your operations with other more sustainable options, as One Week Bath did.

And automakers are starting to roll out more hybrid, alternative, and so-called “flexible” fuel models. These are gasoline-powered vehicles that can run on corn-

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