

Electric vehicles: Are they worth it?

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Every year, more and more people are making the switch to electric vehicles (EVs), with more than 1.6 million electric vehicles (EV) being sold in the U.S. in 2023, a 60% increase on the 1 million electric vehicles sold in 2022. This increased popularity in electric vehicles has sparked quite the debate among Americans, with many people believing that converting from traditional combustion engines is not worth it.

The first thing most consumers concern themselves with is the price of an EV, and unfortunately, electric vehicles are significantly more expensive to purchase off the lot.

What most consumers do not realize though is that electric vehicles are cheaper to maintain and operate. Using figures from AAA and factoring in average kWh/hour rates in the U.S. using measurement of fuel efficiency, maintenance cost and depreciation, the average electric vehicle will cost roughly \$3,000 less over the first three years of ownership. However, there are two expenses which prove to be pretty costly for most EV owners. The first is the home charging system installation, which can cost the average EV owner anywhere from

\$800-\$4,000. The second is the looming threat of battery replacements, but those concerns are severely over-exaggerated. Most EV batteries come with an average manufacturer warranty spanning eight years or 100,000 miles, so you're protected from additional out-of-pocket costs for battery replacements for a fair amount of time. However, once that warranty expires, you are looking at anywhere from \$6,000 to \$20,000 to replace that battery. Concerns over battery dis-



posal and manufacturing are also common arguments against electric vehicles, but as far as the environmental concerns over lithium batteries, those have also been extremely overplayed. The lithium batteries used to power electric vehicles are full of precious metals such as lithium carbonate and cobalt sulfate, which also happen to be fairly easy to recycle. More than a dozen companies such as Li-Cycle have emerged with the rise of EVs and specialize in recycling those batteries. According

to Li-Cycle, these companies are able to re-use 95% of the metal components from each used battery and recommission them into brand new EV batteries. All of this is done with 70% less emissions and pollution than a traditional lithium mine as well, and we are able to produce our own EV batteries right here in the States, with the U.S. now making up roughly 15% of the world's EV battery production.

The last argument I'll address centers on the concern over natural resources. Obviously, moving towards electric vehicles will lower our dependence on non-replenishable fossil fuels, which is certainly a good thing. However, we then put more strain and dependence on our power grid, which as we saw during "snowmageddon" just a few years ago, can be extremely fragile at times. While I do believe that switch would be better for us in the long run, it certainly isn't a perfect solution. With all of that said, electric vehicles in theory are an amazing alternative to traditional gasoline-powered cars, but their greatest downfall at the moment is the seemingly unnecessary expenses. It is a great option for those who have the money to spend, but for the average person, the benefits don't seem to outweigh the costs.

The Hidden Dangers of Firework Displays to Pets

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As summer nights sparkle with the excitement of firework displays, pet owners must be aware of the hidden dangers these celebrations pose to their furry friends. While fireworks can bring joy and amazement to humans, they often create a terrifying and potentially harmful environment for pets. Understanding these risks is crucial in ensuring the safety and well-being of our beloved companions during festive seasons.

The Fear Factor

One of the most immediate dangers of fireworks to pets is the overwhelming fear they can induce. The loud noises, bright flashes, and sudden bursts of light can be incredibly stressful for animals. Dogs and cats, in particular, have much more acute hearing than humans, making the sounds of fireworks even more intense and frightening. This fear can lead to a range of behavioral issues, such as:

- **Panic and Escape:** Terrified pets may attempt to flee from the noise, often leading to lost pets as they run away in search of safety. This can result in them getting injured or lost, creating additional stress and danger.

- **Destructive Behavior:** In their panic, pets might engage in destructive behavior, such as chewing furniture, scratching doors, or even injuring themselves in attempts to

hide or escape.

- **Anxiety and Phobias:** Repeated exposure to fireworks can lead to long-term anxiety and phobias. Some pets may develop a generalized fear of loud noises, making future experiences with thunderstorms or other loud events equally traumatic.

Physical Risks

Beyond the psychological impact, fireworks pose direct physical dangers to pets:

- **Burns and Injuries:** Curious pets might approach spent or active fireworks, risking burns or other injuries. The chemicals in fireworks can be harmful if ingested or if they come into contact with a pet's skin or eyes.

- **Toxic Exposure:** Fireworks contain various chemicals and heavy metals, such as potassium nitrate, arsenic, and barium, which are toxic to animals. Ingesting these substances, whether by chewing on fireworks or consuming debris, can lead to severe health issues or even death.

- **Air Quality:** The smoke and particulate matter released during firework displays can affect pets with respiratory conditions. Even pets without pre-existing conditions might experience respiratory distress, especially if they are exposed to dense smoke.

Preventative Measures

To protect pets from the dangers of fireworks, pet owners should take several

precautionary steps:

- **Create a Safe Space:** Designate a quiet, secure area in your home where your pet can feel safe during fireworks. Provide comforting items like their favorite blanket or toy and consider playing calming music to drown out the noise.

- **Keep Pets Indoors:** Ensure that pets are kept indoors during firework displays. Close windows and curtains to minimize the noise and light flashes. Make sure your pet is microchipped and wears a collar with identification tags in case they do manage to escape.

- **Use Calming Aids:** For particularly anxious pets, consider using calming aids such as anxiety wraps, pheromone diffusers, or veterinarian-prescribed medications.
- **Stay Calm:** Pets often pick up on their owners' emotions. Staying calm and acting normally can help reassure your pet that there is no real threat.

Conclusion

While firework displays are a cherished tradition for many, it's essential to remember the potential risks they pose to our pets. By taking proactive steps to mitigate these dangers, pet owners can ensure that celebrations are enjoyable for everyone, including their furry family members. Awareness and preparation are key to keeping pets safe and comfortable during festive events, allowing everyone to enjoy the spectacle without fear or harm.

Legality of fireworks

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As the Fourth of July approaches, it is important to refresh ourselves on the laws and stipulations regarding the use of fireworks in the state of Texas and Cherokee County. First and foremost, the use of fireworks is prohibited for civilians within the city limits of Jacksonville, Rusk, Troup, Alto and Wells, and firework displays should be left to trained professionals and organized displays. If you are looking to purchase fireworks for use outside of the city limits, fireworks are permitted to be sold from June 24 to July 4. Though the use of fireworks is legal outside of city limits, there are still restrictions placed on certain fireworks within the state of Texas. Fireworks allowed in Texas fall under the "Class C" or "Fireworks 1.4G" classification. These fireworks include:

- Caps for toy pistols;
- "Common" small fireworks that have audible or visual effects, but don't expel shrapnel;
- Roman candles not exceeding 10 balls in the tube, not

exceeding either 20 grams per ball in weight with a tube no bigger than 3/8 of an inch in diameter;

- "Helicopter" rockets with an inside tube no more than 1/2 an inch in diameter and no more than 20 grams each in weight;
- Cylindrical or cone fountains;
- Wheels that do not weigh more than 240 grams each;
- Sparklers and dipped sticks;
- Firecrackers that are no bigger than 1.5 inches long or 1/4 inch in diameter; and
- Toy smoke devices or toy propellant devices that do not produce an outside flame.

Fireworks that are **not** allowed in Texas include:

- Skyrockets or "bottle rockets" with
 - A total propellant charge of less than 4 grams;
 - A casing size of less than 5/8 of an inch in outside diameter and less than 3.5 inches long; and
 - An overall length, including stick, of less than 15 inches; and
- Other fireworks not considered acceptable according to the United States Consumer Product Safety Commission.

Want to make your building look better?

By JO ANNE EMBLETON
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RUSK – An innovative 50% matching grant program launched more than two years ago is still drawing interest from local businesses seeking to revitalize their look ... and ultimately, the community, said Rusk Economic Development Corporation executive director Carlton Crothers.

Funds provided through the grant for exterior renovation of existing business buildings, helps the community to retain its historical character, while at the same time

attracting new businesses and visitors, and creating new jobs, he said when the Façade Grant Program was announced in 2021.

This program encourages restoration of historic facades; installation of energy-efficient materials; window replacement; and renovation of storefronts. However, it does not cover roof repair or interior renovation.

In recent weeks, the REDC board approved a request from operators of the TJ Rusk Hotel, who were seeking to install black canvas awnings and a new garage door facing Main Street, at the facility

located on the Rusk downtown square.

The board approved up to the maximum amount of \$10,000 allotted through the Façade Grant Program, which "offers a matching reimbursement of \$0.50 to \$1.00 per dollar spent, with a maximum reimbursement of \$10,000 for projects exceeding \$20,000," Crothers said.

"We encourage our local businesses to explore the REDC Façade Grant and other economic development incentive programs," Crothers said, adding this "attracts new businesses, diversifies our offerings, and creates

additional destinations that draw people to Rusk, ultimately stimulating economic growth.

Applications for the Façade Grant program are currently being accepted from local businesses located within the City of Rusk; "Project must not start before submitting an application and getting approval from REDC to qualify for any incentive REDC may offer," Crothers said.

To learn more about the façade grant program, contact Carlton Crothers at 430-300-1004 or email ccrothers@rusktx.org

Annual 'Christmas in July' campaign prepares for launch

STAFF REPORTS

CHEROKEE COUNTY – An annual summer fundraiser for the county's Rainbow Room launches soon, with area libraries serving as collection stations for the "Christmas in July" campaign.

The Rainbow Room, maintained and sponsored by the Cherokee County Child & Family Welfare Board, is located at the Texas Depart-

ment of Family & Protective Services office in Jacksonville, and items collected during the campaign help provide children with everyday essential needs, said board member Shirley Reese. Empty bags will be distributed at libraries in Alto, Rusk and Jacksonville, which also will collect filled bags from donors, she said.

"I know money is tight but any help the community

might want to offer would be greatly appreciated," Reese said, adding that the campaign also raises awareness about the needs of children who have been removed from abusive or neglectful home environments.

"Christmas in July" helps replenish the supply shelves at the Rainbow Room with items like school supplies, clothes, personal hygiene items and other things.

A list of suggested donations and the locations of participating sites will be published in a future edition of the Cherokeean Herald.



Active-shooter training to hone local agencies' response at school campuses

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RUSK – July 8-12 trainings at the local high school campus will provide several agencies a chance to hone their preparedness for active shooter events while keeping them in compliance with state law enforcement mandates.

The Advanced Law Enforcement Rapid Response Training (ALERRT) will be offered twice during that period and allows participants to meet minimum training requirements per two-year training cycle. No staff or students will

be present in the area of the building where training will be held, said local organizers. SB 1852, which went into effect last September, "requires every Texas Peace Officer to receive and be trained the same way for active shooter events based on the Texas School Safety Center ALERRT Level I active shooter training by September 2025, and thereafter, the legislation requires all Texas Peace Officers to receive 16 hours of active shooter training yearly," said Rusk Police Chief Scott Heagney, whose department was asked to be a partner sponsor for the training.

Agencies taking part in the upcoming training also include Jacksonville ISD Police Department, Jacksonville Police Department, Alto Police Department and Texas Parks & Wildlife game wardens, with about 40 peace officers registered for the event.

"We sent Detective Sgt. Jeremy Farmer and (Rusk ISD) SRO Leisa Geddie to the instructor training earlier this year and the Texas Game Wardens asked us to partner with them in sponsoring the training," Heagney said. "We wanted to open it up to officers from area agencies because we have the instructors, it

reduces travel expenses, and if one of these events happens locally all of us would be supporting each other so it's ideal that we train together." Alto Police Chief Joe Houghton, who will be in Rusk with another APD officer, called the offering "a great idea. "You know what you're dealing with because you've seen the campus – it's not an unfamiliar area. And when you're more familiar with layout, it actually speeds up your reaction," he said.

Cherokee County Game Warden Mark Braddock agreed. "It gives us a familiarity of the schools by training at them,"

he said.

Three members of the APD force who attended a recent training in Bullard "did a lot of scenario, a lot of real-life stuff, and that's something that lets you know what's coming," Houghton said. Heagney said that his hope "that if an active shooter event of any type ever happens in Rusk we are fully prepared, equipped, and trained to respond appropriately. I don't want a repeat of the police response that happened (in May 2022) at the Uvalde school shooting to happen here. To prevent the type of police response which occurred at

Uvalde is the whole reason the legislature mandated this training for every peace officer in Texas."

Houghton noted that once qualified through the training, peace officers are eligible to respond to an active shooter call no matter where they are in Texas. "It's a statewide alert," he said.

