

Couple turns over a new Leaf

The Nalamwars pick all-electric Nissan for their second car.

By **LOIS ROTHSCHILD**
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Nilam and Omkar Nalamwar are looking forward to the birth of their first baby in 2011. They're also looking ahead at the pleasure they'll get from driving their new Nissan Leaf, the first mass produced all-electric car with zero emissions. They drove the car off the lot at Connell Nissan in Costa Mesa on New Year's Day knowing they're driving a car that doesn't pollute the air.

The Nalamwars also know the lithium ion battery's charge is limited to 100 miles, but said they don't expect to drive it on trips and plan to use the Leaf for in-town driving only.

"We have flexibility," Nalamwar said. "We have another car for longer trips. I heard about the Leaf last spring from friends, and looked it up online. I made my reservation for the car back in April."

The Leaf is quiet – think of Disneyland parking lot trams or golf carts. It's powered with an 80kW electric motor that draws from a lithium ion battery that can be charged at home with either a 220-volt outlet such as dryers use, or a 110 outlet. A 220 outlet requires a \$2,000 accessory



Salesman Chris Klee congratulates Omkar Nalamwar and his wife, Nilan, at Connell Nissan. Mark Ranauro, general manager, is at right.

that gives a full charge in eight hours, says Mark Ranauro, Connell Nissan's general manager. There's a \$1,000 tax credit that applies to that. With a 110 outlet, the charge takes 20 hours.

Commercial businesses offer charging stations that give a full charge in 15 minutes. The Nissan Leaf purchased by the Nalamwars is the first all-electric car that Connell Nissan has sold. It's priced at around \$35,000, but there's a \$7,500 federal tax credit right now and a \$5,000 California tax break, which make the car more affordable. Ranauro said that owners will spend 3 cents per mile for electric-

Nissan Leaf

- Zero tailpipe emissions
- 100 percent electric
- Bluetooth
- Cruise control
- 12-volt DC power outlet
- Satellite radio
- USB connection
- Navigation system

ity, whereas a gasoline-powered car owner spends about 15 cents per mile.

"The Leaf is a niche vehicle," Ranauro said. "Right now less than 1 percent of drivers are interested, and by 2020 maybe 10 percent will want one. But it's not going to overtake other cars. These initial buyers, however, will inspire others"

Typical buyers are age 35 to 55, Ranauro said, and slightly eccentric. "It's the newest thing, and buyers will be more technically inclined, like engineers and others who work in the electronic field. It's the concept. Most people are not risk takers, so buyers will be more affluent."

It's a great car, he said, and performs well. "It has a unique look, a nice line, and people will catch on and enjoy driving it."

"There's no vibration, no noise," said Ranauro. "There's no gas tank and no oil changes. Best of all there's no maintenance, and drivers can go eight years or 80,000 miles with-

out a check-up. The battery is good for eight years or 100,000 miles." You won't see a tailpipe, of course, and even without a gas engine, and with 107 horsepower, the car can get to 60 miles per hour in 10 seconds.

A smaller lead acid battery runs the car's accessories, the satellite radio, power door locks, power windows and is charged from a solar panel on top of the spoiler.

The five-door hatchback carries its own charger cable. There's no ignition key, but instead features an 'intelligent key' and push button start. Owners can also start the car remotely. Or, start the car from their cell

phone.

If you're wondering about the status of the battery and where the nearest charging stations are, you can find out that as well from your cell phone. The navigation system will also be programmed with locations of charging stations.

Connell Nissan expects delivery of five Nissan Leafs in January and five more in February.

Nationwide there's a waiting list of 20,000 people who want to buy the car, Ranauro said.

The Nalamwars will appreciate remote control operation of the car's systems. With a click they can heat up the car for the baby remotely on cold mornings.



The Nissan Leaf, the first all-electric car sold at Connell Nissan in Costa Mesa

PHOTOS: LOIS ROTHSCHILD, THE ORANGE COUNTY REGISTER



A solar panel is in the spoiler.



The lithium ion battery is charged from the rear of the Nissan Leaf.