

Claverack adds Tesla to fleet to explore EV experience

By Jeff Fetzer

CLAVERRACK joined the growing ranks of electric vehicle owners when it added a 2020 Tesla Model 3 to its company fleet in August.

“With growing interest in electric vehicles (EVs), we decided to purchase one so we could give our members an experience-based evaluation of operating an EV in our area,” says Claverack’s director of member services, Brian Zeidner. “We felt this would be a great tool to engage members, with respect to their questions, wants and needs regarding electric vehicle ownership.”

While electric vehicles make up a tiny segment of U.S. auto market — about 2% in 2019 — battery-powered and plug-in hybrid electric cars have generated significant buzz among consumers and the media in the last couple of years. A number of factors are revving up interest in EVs:

- ▶ The introduction of the Tesla Model 3 compact sedan in 2018, which has quickly become the best-selling EV in the United States due to its mid-range pricing, driving fun factor and high customer satisfaction rate.
- ▶ All the major car manufacturers have begun producing electric vehicles, with more EV models being rolled out each year. Ford, the world’s first company to mass produce gas-powered vehicles, is set to begin selling its all-electric Mustang Mach-EV this year and plans to offer an all-electric F-150 pickup in 2021.
- ▶ The pricing gap between electric vehicles and gas-powered vehicles has continued to close.
- ▶ Battery range for EVs has continued to improve, with eight models by various manufacturers exceeding 225 miles per charge, while battery-charging stations have become more commonplace, especially in urban areas and along main transportation routes.

As an electric provider that will be impacted as more people plug into the grid to charge their battery-powered buggies, Claverack has more than a



TEST DRIVE: Claverack Member Service Representative Lynn Jennings and Director of Member Services Brian Zeidner show off the Tesla Model 3 electric vehicle the cooperative acquired in August. The all-wheel drive sedan was purchased in order to familiarize employees with the operations of an electric vehicle so that they can talk knowledgeably with members who are considering purchasing them. Zeidner reports that employees who have taken the car for a spin have been highly enthusiastic about the car’s performance and comfort. The car has a battery range of about 300 miles.

passing interest in monitoring EV market trends. As a cooperative that cites “education, training and information” among its guiding principles, Claverack also seeks to pass information along to its members who may be interested in owning an electric vehicle in the future.

That led the cooperative down the road of EV ownership. Zeidner and Claverack member service representative Lynn Jennings began exploring EV options last year, and, after researching and test-driving battery-powered cars made by several manufacturers, settled on the co-op’s white Tesla Model 3.

“Based on the driving experience, battery range, and the availability of an all-wheel drive option, Tesla seemed to be the best choice,” Zeidner says.

Since taking delivery of the car in late summer, Claverack employees have been test-driving the all-wheel drive Tesla, a four-door sedan with a battery range of about 300 miles.

“We are educating our employees

about the car,” Zeidner says, “so they, in turn, can be employee ambassadors about electric vehicles and provide members with experienced-based answers to question they may have or concerns they may have about EVs.”

He said employees have been using the car for official co-op business to gain more insight and experience with operating an EV.

“The experience we’ve had with the vehicle from the public and the employees so far has been overwhelmingly positive,” he says. “It seems to generate a lot of excitement and questions in regard to energy efficiency and electric vehicles.”

Based on Claverack’s electric rates, Zeidner estimates the cost to charge the car’s battery is about one-third to one-half of the price of fueling a similar-sized gas-powered vehicle.

Members interested in purchasing an electric vehicle or learning more about them can contact the member services department at 1-800-326-9799. 🌱