

Fuel Cell Industry Report

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CONFERENCE PREVIEW

True global forum: Hannover Fair's H₂ and Fuel Cell Group Exhibit

The Hydrogen and Fuel Cell Group Exhibit at the Hannover Fair this April celebrates its tenth anniversary. Planners at Arno A. Evers FAIR-PR reflect on the decade of changes and the new features at the 2004 exhibit.

Usually, a tenfold increase in anticipated business means success, so Arno Evers FAIR-PR is a company reaping the rewards of such success: The first Hydrogen and Fuel Cell Group Exhibit (H₂/FC) in 1995 organized by the public relations company had 10 exhibitors. The H₂/FC Group Exhibit this April 19–24, as part of the Hannover World Fair for Energy Management, Energy Technology, and Renewable Energy, will have 100.

Exhibiting companies range from small to large and represent 15 different countries. Tobias Renz, project manager for FAIR-PR, reports that “20 of our exhibitors are based in North America, while one company travels from Australia for the first time. The other ex-

hibitors are from all over the world.” Countries represented by committed exhibitors for 2004 include Austria, Belgium, Canada, France, Germany, Greece, Italy, the Netherlands, Norway, Portugal, Switzerland, the U.K., and the U.S. Overall, the Energy section of the Hannover fair may have nearly a thousand exhibits and has boasted attendance of 55,000 in the past, with a net display area of 38,000 m².

Special fair “flavor”

FCIR asked about the special “flavor,” or atmosphere, of the H₂/FC Group Exhibit and how that has changed over the past 10 years. Renz replies that the variety of exhibitors, the complete overview of industry technology in

one location, open forums with major players and relatively new or small companies alike, the in-depth discussion of the challenges of commercialization, and the international networking opportunities make up the multiple elements of the exhibit’s special “flavor.” He points out that the first exhibit featured all German companies, and most were research institutions or research departments within large companies. This year’s H₂/FC Group Exhibit has an area of about 3,000 m² within the Energy area, and an obvious increase in international participation.

Perhaps the biggest change in the Group Exhibit is the capitalization upon information technology and the Internet. “We’re able to offer virtual coverage from the H₂/FC Group Exhibit before, after, and most importantly, during the Hannover fair. This includes all photos, documentation, forum interviews, and statements from our exhibitors, in real time,” says Renz. The virtual exhibit is open and updated year round, allowing exhibitors to stay current

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in announcing product and technology achievements.

New features in April

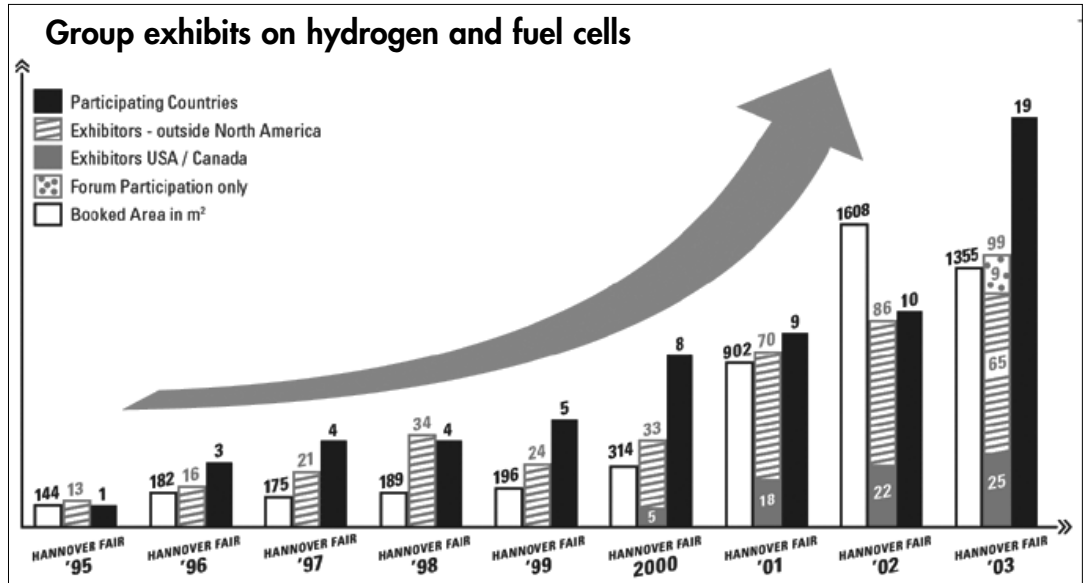
New at this year's fair will be a progress demonstration reflecting a decade of changes in product technology among the H₂/FC exhibitors. Also, FAIR-PR is offering an internship for a trainee to assist in the coordination of the Group Exhibit. Qualifications are posted on the firm's website. This "hands on" opportunity does not require previous knowledge of the fuel cell industry.

Led by Arno Evers, FAIR-PR has always sought to create a world community of H₂ and fuel cell companies in the Group Ex-

hibit, so that "researchers and CEOs and entrepreneurs and government representatives can be standing side by side for open dialogue," Renz observes. Throughout the fair, each of the H₂/FC exhibitors has a 20-minute forum to present its company, products, and indus-

try perspective. A preliminary forum program is posted on the FAIR-PR website.

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International fuel cell companies of all sizes have increased tenfold as exhibitors at the Hannover Fair.

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