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IBM pours a shot of methanol for ThinkPads

By [Dinesh C. Sharma, CNET News.com](#)

12 April 2005

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IBM and Sanyo Electric have put together a prototype of a fuel cell system for ThinkPad notebooks.

The methanol-based fuel cell is designed to work with most standard ThinkPad systems and could provide power for up to eight hours, the companies said Monday.



IBM and Sanyo Electric have developed a prototype of a methanol-based fuel cell system for IBM ThinkPads. The fuel cell can be charged by means of an auxiliary docking station, which also provides an alternative power supply. Credit: IBM



Taiwan-based Antig Technology said this year it plans to launch a compact fuel cell for notebook PCs, shown here in prototype at CeBit in Hannover, Germany. Credit: Ingrid Marson, ZDNet UK

The new battery does not require any change in the internal power architecture of the ThinkPad. The fuel cell can be charged by means of an auxiliary docking station, which also provides an alternative power supply.

Technology companies are working on fuel cells as a way to enhance the battery life of mobile devices such as notebooks, MP3 players and mobile phones.

Unlike traditional batteries, fuel cells usually use alcohol or hydrogen as fuel and can offer five to 10 times the power-per-unit weight as lithium-ion batteries. Fuel cells are also being looked at as power sources for automobiles.

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"This is quite a new concept that utilises both micro fuel cells and rechargeable batteries," Mitsuru Homma, group executive of power solutions at Sanyo, said in a statement.

"This hybrid system could enable the user to efficiently operate IBM's ThinkPad notebooks for a longer time compared to systems with only a fuel cell, while also providing the convenience of an AC cordless environment."


IBM's ThinkPad and other PC operations are to be transferred to the control of Lenovo Group during the second quarter. IBM agreed to sell its PC business to Lenovo in December.


No date was given for a commercial release of the fuel cell technology.


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