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Can America go green?

From BBC radio

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Journalist: Here at the New York motor show thousands of people have come to enjoy a sneak preview of next year's most desirable cars and trucks, and to look at the futuristic concept cars the makers hope we'll be driving a decade from now. It's an appropriate place to begin this BBC World Service series that asks the question : « Can America go green? »

Americans make up 5% of the world's population but produce 25% of its carbon dioxide emissions. The US is one of only two nations to have rejected the Kyoto Protocol and with it, mandatory cuts in polluting emissions. In these three programmes I'll be looking at the approach to tackling climate change being taken by corporate America and at grassroots activism amongst ordinary people. But we're starting with gasoline. Can America be weaned off its addiction to oil. And there are plenty of enormous gas-guzzling vehicles on show here. But is the tide turning?

Richard Wagner : Well, here it is, the Chevrolet Volt, an electrically-driven car from General Motors. I am shocked. A GM electric vehicle is an inconvenient truth.

Journalist : General Motors boss, Richard Wagner, admits that, like it or not, the era of gasoline is ending.

Richard Wagner : For us I think it is really a business necessity that we find alternative sources of propulsion for vehicles, because if we continue to rely almost exclusively on petroleum, with greater and greater demands for that petroleum, and at some point we either run out or it gets priced very high and obviously some anxiety on where it's located.

Journalist : There's been a profound change in the thinking about oil here in America. Worry about the price and security of oil supplies from the Middle East has coincided with grave concern about global warming, To unite people of different political persuasions, even religious groups have entered the debate.