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## Natural gas cars threatened with economic total loss

According to the Federal Motor Transport Authority, just over 77,000 cars powered by natural gas are on German roads. Over the years, however, the demand for cars that can run on compressed natural gas (CNG) has plummeted. According to the ADAC, no new cars with this drive system are currently available. The number of CNG filling stations has also been steadily declining since 2016. Around 700 of them were still in operation in Germany at the beginning of 2024, according to the car club.

Owners of CNG-powered cars therefore have fewer and fewer opportunities to refuel and sometimes have to make long detours to the nearest filling station. Spare parts are also becoming less and less available. However, the tanks of CNG cars usually have to be replaced after 20 years at the latest, and in some cases even sooner. "Because the spare parts are expensive or no longer available, this can lead to a total economic loss," warns Florian Hördegen, Head of Vehicle Technology at the ADAC Technical Center in Landsberg.

Even inexpensive, used replacement tanks from other countries are usually not accepted in this country because they lack approval. An alternative would be to check whether the vehicle can be converted back to pure gasoline operation. This may be possible with so-called bivalent CNG models, provided that solo operation with petrol is noted in the operating license and emissions-tested.

The ADAC advocates maintaining a nationwide network of CNG filling stations and the supply of spare parts, at least in the medium term. This would be desirable not only in terms of consumer protection, but also climate protection. In the ADAC Ecotest, which rates cars according to their environmental compatibility, natural gas-powered models regularly outperform their gasoline and diesel competitors. In terms of their CO<sub>2</sub> balance, some of them are even as good as electric cars. This is mainly due to the addition of biomethane, which is produced by fermenting liquid manure, food waste and renewable raw materials such as maize and grass. (aum)

Photo: Auto-Medienportal.Net/Erdgas Mobil