

BMW Runs Crash-Test Sims in Iceland, Goes Green With Geothermal Computers

by CLIFFORD ATIYEH

Save for a nonsensical first drive of a new Subaru, we don't include Iceland in our general coverage. But the tiny Nordic isle has been drawing BMW's R&D budget for—thing of all things—carbon-free computers.

BMW's eco-friendly agenda for its i3 and i8 electric cars has seeped into places where even the most Californian of Californians doesn't check—the servers processing CAD models, crash simulations, aerodynamics, and other data-heavy computing required for their development. In Iceland, geothermal heat and hydroelectric dams keep 1300 servers humming for BMW day and night, with naturally cold air to chill all the rigs. If that sounds expensive, in Iceland—where active volcanoes keep piping hot water under the surface and power two-thirds of the country's energy usage—it's easy.

More than 80 percent of the country runs on renewable electricity, and since the natural resources are abundant and accessible, they're not hit with the price premiums found elsewhere in



the world. According to Verne Global, BMW's server-farm supplier, the automaker cut 3570 metric tons of CO₂ emissions and 82 percent of its operating costs by crunching data in Iceland versus Germany. BMW says it's planning to use the Icelandic hardware for "more functions in the future." That includes a new dedicated computing center in Reykjavik, which could mean storing cloud data collected from its ConnectedDrive in-car wireless services or simply improving the current i lineup.