

U.S. Auto Industry Adds 236,000 Jobs Since '09

DETROIT – With the launch of new federal vehicle fuel economy rules only about one week away, the American auto industry has grown by nearly a quarter million jobs (236,600) since June 2009 when the auto industry hit bottom, according to a new report available online from DrivingGrowth.org.

The report finds that fuel efficiency is a major factor behind the significant gains in recent U.S. auto jobs.

A website that tracks the revitalization of the U.S. auto industry, DrivingGrowth.org is sponsored by three leading U.S. environmental organizations: The Natural Resources Defense Council, the National Wildlife Federation, and the Michigan League of Conservation Voters Education Fund.

Manufacturing of motor vehicle and parts has grown by 165,100, or 26.4 percent since June 2009.

Another 71,500 jobs have been added at U.S. auto dealerships. Automakers, their suppliers and their dealers are now looking ahead to a brighter future after the dark days of the recession.

Examples of how fuel-efficiency standards are accelerating the auto industry's recovery in the U.S. include the following:

- Michigan – 35,200 new auto manufacturing jobs since June 2009 when the auto industry hit bottom, accounting for half of the state's total job gains over the same period. In Saginaw, Michigan, for example, automotive supplier has added 650 jobs and will retain an additional 1,000 jobs for production of electric power steering components (EPS) for U.S.-made pickup trucks. EPS, which replaces a

more fuel intensive hydraulic system, can boost fuel economy by 4-6 percent on a typical vehicle.

- Indiana – 19,800 new auto manufacturing jobs since June 2009 when the auto industry hit bottom, accounting for over one third of the state's total job gains over the same period. In Greensburg, Indiana, Honda is investing \$40 million and will hire 300 new workers as its Indiana facility becomes the sole global producer of the fuel-efficient Honda Civic hybrid.

The Civic will, in turn, be exported to markets around the world from Indiana.

- Ohio – 11,300 new auto jobs since June 2009 when the auto industry hit bottom, accounting for one quarter of the state's total job gains over the same period. In Warren, Ohio, General Motors is running three shifts at its Lordstown Assembly plant, adding 1,200 jobs and employing 4,200 total workers to produce the high-mileage Chevy Cruze, which achieves 42 miles per gallon (MPG) in the EcoCruze model.

"Setting strong fuel efficiency standards means we are sending more of our energy dollars to the Midwest, not the Middle East" said Tiffany Ingram, Midwest advocacy director for NRDC. "Global automakers are now sourcing their most advanced, high-tech manufacturing here in the United States, creating a more sustainable and secure future for U.S. industry and U.S. workers."

"People in Ohio want clean air and clean water – and we can have both by bringing clean car manufacturing jobs to," said Frank Szollosi, federal policy associate for the NWF's Great Lakes Regional Center.

Mopar HEMI Challenge – Featuring '68 Darts, 'Cudas – Set for Indy Race

AUBURN HILLS – The 2012 Mopar HEMI Challenge will take to the track for the 12th consecutive year during the Mac Tools U.S. Nationals at Lucas Oil Raceway in Indianapolis, Aug. 30–31.

For the second straight year, \$15,000 will go to the winner of the Challenge, which pairs Mopar-powered Super Stock/A-HEMI (SS/AH) competitors against each other in a high-stakes quarter-mile showdown.

The Mopar HEMI Challenge began as a one-race shootout at the 2001 Mac Tools U.S. Nationals, and returned to that format last year, after a number of seasons as a multi-event mini-series.

The race features 1968 Dodge Darts and Plymouth Barracudas – the classic package cars that helped build the Mopar brand's impressive reputation at the drag strip – engaged in quarter-mile battles.

"The Mopar HEMI Challenge continues to grow and build momentum each year," said Pietro Gorlier, president and CEO of Mopar, Chrysler Group LLC's service, parts and customer-care brand.

"The NHRA Sportsman drag racers that compete in the Mopar HEMI Challenge are the backbone of the sport, and have a passion for the Mopar brand that they carry with them wherever they go. The Mopar HEMI Challenge is a great way to recognize their passion and dedication to the brand and the sport."

Eric Lotz, director of field marketing, NHRA, added, "We are excited to have the Mopar HEMI Challenge event return as part of the tradition-rich Mac Tools U.S. Nationals. It has become an important part of the event and a must-see for all sportsman racing enthusiasts."

Mopar HEMI Challenge qualify-

ing is set for Thursday, Aug. 30, with eliminations scheduled for Friday, Aug. 31. The Mopar HEMI Challenge final round will take place during Funny Car and Top Fuel qualifying rounds on that Friday.

Along with the \$15,000 winner's purse, \$1,500 will be awarded to the runner-up, with \$500 going to both the third- and fourth-place finishers. The No. 1 Qualifier during the Mopar HEMI Challenge will also take home \$500.

Charlie Westcott, Jr., of Parma, Mich., was victorious over his father, Charlie Westcott, Sr., at Indy in 2011, earning his fourth-career Mopar HEMI Challenge win at Lucas Oil Raceway at Indianapolis. The second-generation driver won the event for the first time in 2005 and repeated in 2006 and again in 2008.

Bucky Hess won the inaugural Mopar HEMI Challenge at Indy in 2001. Richard Beshore claimed the top prize the following year, with Jerry Jenkins taking the win in 2003. Four-time NHRA Pro Stock champion Jeg Coughlin, Jr., won the Mopar HEMI Challenge in 2004, while Rick Houser captured the 2007 edition of the event, with Charlie Westcott, Sr., joining his son as an Indy winner in 2000. Jim Daniels took home the hardware in 2010.

Chicago Dates Are Set

The Chicago Auto Show has announced that its public dates for 2013 are Feb. 9-18. The show's black-tie charity event, called First Look for Charity, will shift from Thursday to Friday, Feb. 8. Accordingly, Media Preview begins on Feb. 7 and concludes on Feb. 8.

This marks the first time since 1998 that the show will open to the public on a Saturday.

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