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GM Unveils '14 Silverado, Sierra

by Jim Stickford

GM kicked off the introduction of the GMC Sierra 1500 and Chevy Silverado 1500 with sound and fury, signifying the next generation in the company’s full-size pickup trucks.

The event literally began with a bang when a pyrotechnic explosion launched the introduction of the Silverado.

Mark Reuss, president of GM North America, said GM’s truck customers rely on their trucks to meet the day-to-day challenges of earning a living, running a business and taking care of their families.

“Chevrolet is committed to giving truck customers the most refined, best-engineered pickups in the market,” Reuss said.

To that end, the 2014 Silverado 1500 will become part of Chevrolet’s three-truck portfolio, with each particular truck designed to let customers pick the truck that meets their particular needs.

The 2014 Silverado joins the Silverado 2500 and 3500 HD pickups, which were new for the 2011 model year.

Reuss said that Chevrolet is also developing an all-new Colorado midsize pickup meant to offer “truck capability in a space- and fuel-efficient package.”

Jeff Luke, executive chief engi-

neer for full-size and mid-size trucks said the Silverado 1500 offers some new features that should serve customers well while offering good looks.

“The exterior design is more aerodynamic while looking good with a twin-port grille, full-width bumper and a dual power dome hood that “creates a strong presence, which is carried through in sculpted body sides and fender flares.”

Luke said what’s under the hood is also impressive. The Silverado 1500 will feature a family of three all-new EcoTec3 engines.

There will be a V6 and two V8s, each engineered specifically for use in full-size trucks. All three engines will incorporate direct fuel injection, cylinder deactivation and continuously variable valve timing.

This, Luke said, is a combination of advanced technologies not found in the competition’s trucks and the engines will switch seamlessly to four-cylinder operation to improve efficiency during light load driving.

The dashboard is designed to be intuitive to use and easy to operate, even if the driver is wearing gloves.

Both the Silverado and the Sierra will feature a “cornerstep” bumper combined with handholds that will make it easy for



2014 GMC Sierra 1500



2014 Chevrolet Silverado 1500

people to climb in the bed.

Reuss said Sierra and Silverado are different brands and the customers are different. The Silverado is a work truck that combines functionality and passion, while the Sierra customer favors premium brands.

This distinction is represented

in the Sierra’s interior. It features new soft-touch materials and available aluminum trim line for the interior.

“Truck owners want a well-crafted cabin, but also one that

feels like a truck,” said Helen Emley, Sierra interior design director.

“They want a purposeful interior, not one that’s flowing like you’d find in a car or a crossover.”

Finalists Named for NAIAS Car/Truck of Year

A group of 49 automotive journalists from Canada and the United States has selected the Cadillac ATS, the Ford Fusion and the Honda Accord as finalists for the 2013 North American Car of the Year.

The Ford C-Max, Mazda CX-5 and Ram 1500 are the finalists for the Truck/Utility of the Year.

This year, to reflect the numbers of crossover vehicles in the North American market, jurors voted to change the name North Ameri-

can Truck of the Year to North American Truck/Utility of the Year.

The six finalists were announced last week at an Automotive Press Association luncheon in Detroit.

This is the 20th year of the awards, which are unique in the United States because, instead of being given by a single media outlet, they are awarded by a coalition of automotive journalists from the United States and Canada representing magazines, television, ra-

dio, newspapers and websites.

The awards are financed by the jurors’ dues and the organization does not accept advertising or fees from automakers.

To be eligible, a vehicle must be all new or substantially changed. After considering dozens of vehicles this year, the jurors finally narrowed the field to the 11 cars and 10 trucks on which they voted.

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Max Grabowsky, left, founder of Rapid Motor Vehicle Co., is shown here around 1950. His 1902 truck would pave the way for the GMC brand.

GMC Truck Reflects on 110 Years of History

The all-new 2014 GMC Sierra full-size pickup will be the latest in a bloodline that stretches back over a century.

The first truck to wear a GMC badge debuted in 1912, while a predecessor from the Max Grabowsky’s Rapid Motor Vehicle Co. was the first commercial truck operated in the City of Detroit 10 years earlier.

Here’s a list of highlights:

- 1900s: The first Rapid truck – little more than a seat, an engine cover and a frame – was delivered in 1902.

- 1910s: The GMC name takes its place on a truck grille for the first time in 1912 and the mix of trucks offered had either upright front ends or curved “French” fronts.

- 1920s: The year 1927 was a milestone for design features with more stylized fenders, headlights attached to the radiator, and the first chrome-plated radiator surround.

- 1930s: Streamlining in the '30s added sloped grilles, more paint color options and passenger cabs inspired by car design trends, which helped expand the truck market.

- 1940s: Following the war, GMCs of the late '40s featured fully integrated headlights, as well as wider, lower, and bolder grilles.

- 1950s: Cars again influenced truck design in the '50s, resulting in more safety, comfort and performance. Hooded headlights and panoramic glass in 1955.

- 1960s: The first GMC pickup

with a full-width hood debuted in 1960. Other design cues included “jet pod” grilles at the front and a pinched-waist body crease on each side.

- 1970s: Padded materials replaced many metal interior surfaces in the '70s; heavy-duty models offered a dual rear axle for the first time; the Crew Cab debuted.

- 1980s: In 1987, the Sierra name became standard for all full-size pickups with the introduction of a new, more aerodynamic generation of GMC trucks.

- 1990s: The '90s brought the first rear-hinged three-door Extended Cab. In 1999, a new generation of truck introduced the first use of frame hydroforming.

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Analyst Predicts U.S. Vehicle Sales to Hit 15.1M in 2013

by Jim Stickford

Mike Wall, director of automotive analysis for IHS Automotive, spoke to the Dykema Gossett Automotive Industry Group last week about how he sees the industry going for the next several years.

Overall, he said, things are looking better for the North American market in terms of production and sales. But the market has become more global. North America is no longer its own niche market. Even Detroit OEMs are making cars for the local market with global designs and parts.

He said for the past several years, the auto industry has seen lethargic growth. Every time it seemed like things were beginning to get a little better, he said, something happened. There were floods in Thailand, the

earthquake in Japan, the Arab Spring and a financial crisis in Europe. In the United States, he said, we’re facing the fiscal cliff.

But at least in North America, things should be getting better starting in 2013. Wall said he expects to see GDP growth of 1.9 percent next year and nearly 3 percent growth for 2014.

“Right now, North America is a huge engine of growth,” Wall said. “In China, things have slowed down a little bit at the beginning of the year, but they added stimulus so there should be a soft landing there.”

“True vehicle sales and production growth will be in areas like South America, Southeastern Asia. The middle class there is starting to get traction.”

For now, production in Europe will decline in the short run, Wall said, but production in North

America will rise. German and Japanese manufacturers should increase production over the next few years in North America as they want to build closer to where their customers are and to avoid problems with currency fluctuations.

But Europe, Wall said, is in a different place right now. Sales of vehicles will decline in the next couple of years and they are not scrapping cars as fast.

Additionally, he said, U.S. manufacturers during the last downturn were able to get rid of overcapacity and work out better deals with unions. European manufacturers haven’t done that because closing down a plant can be very difficult.

Wall said his faith in the growth of the North American car market is based on the correlation between consumer confi-

dence and car sales. Confidence is up right now, which is boosting sales, and helping matters further is the age of American cars. They’re older and many owners will have to replace them in the next few years. He said he expects sales to accelerate over the next few years.

He said he believes that Washington will eventually work out a deal to avoid the fiscal cliff. The short-term effects, if that happens, would be similar to what happened after Hurricane Sandy – a short drop in sales, followed by an increase to make up for lost time.

“We’re right now pivoting from a slow recovery to more strong sales patterns,” Wall said. “I expect (U.S.) sales to go from about 14.4 million in 2012 to 15.1 million in 2013. We have a ways to go in terms of job growth, but if you look at the housing market, it’s starting



IHS Automotive’s Mike Wall

to turn. We’re seeing increases in housing starts and new housing construction. That will really affect the sales of pickup trucks.”

Demographically, Wall said he expects 2.5 million drivers a year to come of age in the near future.

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