

Cherokee Name Back

by Irena Granaas

After an 11-year absence, the Cherokee name returns to the Jeep brand in time for the 2014 version's grand reveal at the New York International Auto Show March 27-28.

Chrysler stopped producing the Cherokee in the United States, Canada and Mexico in 2001, replacing it with the Liberty.

The popular mid-size sport-utility continued to be known as the Cherokee in Chrysler's other global markets, explained Chrysler spokesperson Kathy Graham.

"The Cherokee is returning," she said. "The name is instantly

recognizable – it's the most capable mid-size SUV in the world, but for 2014 it's also going to have great on-road dynamics and greatly improved fuel efficiency compared to the Liberty."

According to Chrysler, the all-new 2014 Jeep Cherokee will feature an impressive 45 percent jump in fuel economy, as well as enhanced on-road driving characteristics compared with the outgoing Jeep Liberty mid-size SUV.

The 2014 Cherokee is slated to arrive in dealer showrooms in the third quarter of this year.

The Jeep Cherokee will be built at Chrysler's Toledo Assembly Plant in Ohio.



2014 Jeep Cherokee

GM Moves Heavy Stamping Gear To Arlington Plant

The first shipment of massive equipment to stamp out components for General Motors' new full-size SUVs arrives at the Arlington Stamping Plant in late February.

The four presses, pit equipment and two press beds – weighing a total of 5 million pounds – are making their way 550 miles from the Port of Houston.

GM is building a \$200 million stamping facility at its Arlington Assembly plant – part of more than \$531 million GM has invested there since 2009.

The Arlington plant added 180 new jobs to operate three complete press lines that will make external and internal sheet metal components for the vehicle assembly plant.

Overall, GM Arlington has added 1,000 new jobs to meet demand of the current generation SUVs and to build the next generation full-size Chevrolet Tahoe, Chevrolet Suburban, GMC Yukon, and Cadillac Escalade SUVs. The plant directly employs 3,500 people.

Because of their size, the presses are being transported during daylight hours along a carefully planned route approved by the Texas Department of Transportation.

This ensures that all roadways can safely accommodate the heavy load.

The route winds around Houston taking the materials through several Texas communities north to Arlington. Residents in Port of Houston, Dayton, Cleveland, Conroe, Prairie View, Personville, Mexia, Joshua, Mansfield, and Arlington can witness GM adding to the rebound of American manufacturing.

Ford Boosts Its Motorhome Chassis Output by a Third

by Irena Granaas

Americans value the freedom of the open road, and hitting the highway in an RV is a longstanding American tradition that is experiencing a renaissance as the U.S. economy begins to show signs of recovery.

To help the RV industry meet the growing demand for motorhomes, Ford is increasing production capacity by 35 percent for the Ford F-53 motorhome chassis and also the F-59 commercial chassis, both built by Ford's partner at the Detroit Chassis state-of-the-art plant in Detroit.

"We're pleased that while other chassis manufacturers have left this segment, Ford continues its commitment to the RV upfitter industry," said Ken Czubay, Ford vice president, U.S. Marketing, Sales and Service. "We're increasing our participation in this industry as motorhome customers return to the market."

According to data published on the Recreational Vehicle Industry Association (RVIA) website, shipments of Class A mo-

torhomes rose more than 13 percent in 2012, with demand rising even more sharply at the close of the year, up 33 percent in December alone compared with December 2011, and up 43 percent in the fourth quarter. According to Ford, F-53 chassis registrations in 2012 reached their highest level since 2007.

The 285,749 towable units also bettered the year-end prediction posted in the Winter 2012 issue of *RV Roadsigns*, according to a recent news release on the RVIA website.

"The industry was able to capitalize on an improving economy and strengthening consumer confidence to post substantial gains in 2012," said RVIA President Richard Coon in the release. "We anticipate this moderate growth continuing in the coming year."

Class A motorhomes are recreational vehicles built on a stripped truck chassis, using what otherwise would be the driver's area as part of the living area.

Ford supplies the suspension, powertrain, steering components and frame rails, and the units are



Many major motorhome makers build their products on a Ford chassis.

sold to companies like Thor, Winnebago and Fleetwood for assembly into motorhomes, explained Ford Truck Communications Manager Mark Levine.

The RV chassis is offered in both the Class A and Class C (E-Series chassis) markets.

"We're pleased to be increasing our participation in this segment," Levine said.

Ford is also increasing production capacity of its 6.8-liter V10 engine that powers its F-53 motorhome chassis lineup by 25 percent.

The workhorse is also a very popular gasoline engine with Ford's commercial customers. The 6.8-liter V10 also is used to power the E-Series vans, F-Series Super Duty chassis cabs and the F-650 medium-duty truck.

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