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GM No Featherweight in Manufacturing

It's not exactly for the birds. In fact, it's for the cars – and their quality.

At GM, ostrich feathers are among the “tools” used by some quality operators.

Amid the high-tech robots, miles of conveyers and multiple assembly lines, a number of inconspicuous hand-held “tools” – including one that uses ostrich feathers – are being used in an effort by GM to get top levels of vehicle quality before the vehicles leave the assembly plants across the country.

This attention to detail is important because Chevrolet, Cadillac, GMC and Buick are in the midst of launching 27 new or significantly updated cars, trucks and crossovers this year and in 2014.

According to a GM news release, Chevrolet alone will launch 13 “all-new” or significantly revised cars, trucks and crossovers in 2013, including the Chevrolet Silverado, Impala, Corvette Stingray and Cruze diesel.

“Customers probably don't think about what actually goes into putting a high-quality vehicle on the road, although that's exactly what they expect in appearance and functionality when they are shopping for a new vehicle,” said Mike Ptashnik, Quality manager at GM's Detroit-Ham-

tramck Assembly. “These tools may be small, but they are really important in helping us build vehicles that deliver on customer expectations.”

Five of these tools, used in most of GM's 12 assembly plants in the United States, are:

- Female ostrich feathers that remove fine exterior dust particles before a vehicle is painted;
- Gap sticks to help ensure uniform body fits;
- Velocity meter gauges that confirm door closing efforts are what customers expect;
- Sniffer gauge that detects refrigerant leaks in the engine compartment;

• A water probe that senses interior moisture.

Jay Baron, president and CEO of the Center for Automotive Research in Ann Arbor, Mich., also sees small tools making big quality contributions.

“With all the technology that goes into designing and making the car, in the end, it's the small things that really matter,” said Baron.

“If the door gaps are not flush and parallel, or the door squeaks when you open it, or there's a small fleck in the paint finish, the overall quality of the vehicle

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A not-yet-assembled Chevrolet Volt makes its way through a bank of female ostrich feathers at Detroit-Hamtramck Assembly.

EyesOn Design to Honor Ex-GM Design VP Cherry

An EyesOn Design weekend will be held at, among other places, the Eleanor & Edsel Ford Estate on the weekend of June 14-16.

The weekend begins with a special “Vision Honored Awards Dinner” to be held at the GM Heritage Center, 6400 Center Drive in Sterling Heights. Tickets to the event are \$175 per person and the recipient of the 2013 Lifetime Design Achievement Award will be GM designer Wayne Cherry. Bob Lutz will present the trophy to Cherry.

The award, given annually by the Detroit Institute of Ophthalmology (DIO), is unique in that only vehicle designers who have previously won the award are allowed to vote. Previous winners include such designers as Chris Bangle, Walter de'Silva, Tom Gale, Giorgetto Giugiaro, Chuck Jordan, Robert Lutz, Shiro Nakamura, Chuck Pelly, Sergio Pininfarina and Jack Telnack.

Cherry, who was only the fifth vice president of Design in General Motors' history, joined GM in 1962 after graduating from the Art Center College of Design in Los Angeles.

He soon was a member of the teams that developed the landmark 1966 Oldsmobile Toronado



Wayne Cherry

and the 1967 Chevrolet Camaro designs.

In 1965, he was transferred to GM's British operations, Vauxhall Motors, where he led the design work on the gull-winged XVR Concept and designed the low-slung, mid-engined SRV, and the 1978 Equus.

Named director of Design in 1975, Cherry's team was responsible for a number of successful cars, trucks and coaches that significantly improved Vauxhall's market share.

In 1983, he became director of

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Market Demand Averts Summer Shutdowns at Big Three

Memorial Day is often considered the start of summer and, in the past, Detroit OEMs closed down production plants for a couple of weeks in July and August.

But, times have changed and the summer production schedules of GM, Ford and Chrysler reflect that fact.

“Historically, most plants across North America would schedule summer shutdown periods in early July as standard process to accommodate plant work needed for model year changeover, providing opportunity for facility maintenance and employee vacations,” said Bill

Grotz, GM communications manager for Manufacturing and Labor.

“Today, plant downtime scheduling is driven by specific vehicle life cycles and market demand. This approach gives us more flexibility and enables quicker response to market conditions.

“Shutdown periods will vary by plant based on launch timing of new or refreshed models across the portfolio and our ongoing efforts to align production with market demand.”

Ford will produce an extra 40,000 units by idling select plants for only one week during what has been the traditional

two-week summer shutdown.

“To meet surging customer demand for our top-selling cars, utilities and trucks, we are continuing to run our North American facilities at full manned capacity, and we will add 200,000 units of annual straight-time capacity this year,” said Jim Tetreault, vice president of North America Manufacturing.

“Approximately 75 percent of our plants are running at a three-crew, three-shift or four-crew pattern in order to ensure we're getting more of our products into dealerships.”

To meet demand for Ford vehicles, the company will add nearly

3,500 hourly jobs in 2013. With its latest announcement of more than 2,000 new jobs at Kansas City Assembly, as well as more than 1,400 new jobs at Flat Rock Assembly, Ford is three-quarters of the way to its plan to create 12,000 hourly jobs in the United States by 2015.

Chrysler spokesperson Jodi Tinson said that in order to meet demand for some of the company's most popular models, several Chrysler assembly plants will not observe a summer shutdown. Two of the three plants – Jefferson North and Conner Avenue – are in Detroit. The third is the Toledo North plant in Ohio.

Tinson said that, additionally, all engine, transmission and stamping plants, with the exception of Indiana Transmission Plant II, will work through the summer.

“It's not that unusual for Chrysler to not have a summer shutdown at a particular plant anymore,” Tinson said.

One reason is that in previous eras new models were launched in September. So it made sense to close the plants down so that they could be retooled for the new model production.

Now, routine maintenance is done as needed, even when a plant is in production.



Racecar driver Tony Kanaan celebrates his success at the Indy 500 winner's circle.

Kanaan, Chevrolet Achieve Firsts with Indy 500 Victory

Racecar driver Tony Kanaan won his first Indianapolis 500 this year, the first Indy 500 win for Chevrolet since 2002.

It was also the first trip to Victory Lane for the Chevrolet V6 2.2-liter, direct-injected, twin-turbocharged, purpose-built IndyCar engine.

Kanaan, the 2004 IZOD IndyCar Series champion, started this year's race in 12th position, and led 34 laps.

But the key move came when he took the lead on a lap 197 restart, and was stretching his advantage over the field when the caution flag flew again on lap 198 of the 200-lap race.

Kanaan, who was making his 201st career IndyCar start, took the checkered flag with the race under caution. It was the 97th running of the famous race.

“Congratulations to Tony Kanaan and the No. 11 Chevrolet-powered KV Racing Technology team for winning the 2013 Indianapolis 500,” said Jim Campbell, GM's U.S. vice president of Performance Vehicles and Motorsports.

“Tony drove a great race, and the team executed flawlessly. Their total focus was on driving to the front of the field. Tony and the No. 11 team demonstrated tremendous teamwork, perseverance and a never-give-up attitude all day.

“In addition to Tony Kanaan's Indianapolis 500 victory, congratulations to Andretti Autosport Chevrolet-powered drivers Carlos Munoz, Ryan Hunter-Reay and Marco Andretti on finishing second through fourth, respectively, at the Brickyard.”

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