

Gerald Johnson Named GM's VP, Manufacturing

GM has appointed Gerald Johnson as North America Manufacturing vice president, effective July 1.

Johnson will lead a team of more than 74,000 employees who work in 56 facilities including assembly, stamping, powertrain and component operations in the United States, Canada and Mexico.

"Gerald's proven leadership, experience and passion for product quality will serve him well in this role," said Tim Lee, GM vice president, Global Manufacturing and president, GM International Operations.

"He leads by example as a mentor and strong communicator, engaging his full team to ensure we build only the best for our customers."

Johnson's most recent role was executive director of Global Program Quality and Launch, where he led several key quality initiatives to improve global product launches. His 33-year



Gerald Johnson

GM career includes many leadership positions in Labor Relations and Manufacturing, including an overseas assignment in Zurich.

Johnson holds a bachelor's degree in Industrial Administration from Kettering University and a master's degree in Manufacturing Operations from the Massachusetts Institute of Technology.

He succeeds Diana Tremblay, who recently was named vice president of GM's new Global Business Services group.

Chrysler, NHTSA Resolve Recall Request

by Irena Granaas

Chrysler and the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration (NHTSA) have, according to a Chrysler news release, "resolved their differences" regarding NHTSA's request to have the automaker recall 1993-2004 Jeep Grand Cherokee and 2002-07 Jeep Liberty vehicles.

As reported in this newspaper June 10, Chrysler refused NHTSA's June 3 request to conduct a safety recall of Model Year 1993-98 Jeep Grand Cherokee ZJ platform vehicles, Model Year 1999-2004 Jeep Grand Cherokee WJ platform vehicles, and Model Year 2002-07 Jeep Liberty vehicles based on the KJ platform.

Chrysler disagreed with NHTSA's conclusion that the estimated 2.7 million vehicles included in the latter recall request were defective and posed a safety hazard, while NHTSA officials insisted the vehicles had a design defect in the placement of the gas tanks, posing a risk of tank punctures and fuel leaks when the vehicles are subjected to rear-end collisions. In some cases, subject vehicles struck in the rear have caught fire and, in a few of those instances, deaths have occurred.

As a result of the agreement announced last week, Chrysler will conduct a voluntary safety recall of the 1993-1998 ZJ platform Jeep Grand Cherokee and the 2002-07 Jeep Liberty KJ platform vehicles. That totals about 2.49 million vehicles, but Chrysler estimates only about 1.56 million of them are still on the road.

In a June 18 news release, Chrysler cited safety as a "paramount concern" and sums up, "Chrysler Group's analysis of the data confirms that these vehicles are not defective and are among the safest in the peer group. Nonetheless, Chrysler Group rec-

ognizes that this matter has raised concerns for its customers and wants to take further steps, in coordination with NHTSA, to provide additional measures to supplement the safety of its vehicles."

In a document obtained recently by the *Detroit Auto Scene*, Matthew W. Liddane, Chrysler vice president - Vehicle Concepts, Integration, Functional Sciences & Regulatory Affairs, responds to Frank Borris II, NHTSA director, Office of Defects Investigation (ODI), Office of Enforcement, with a clear statement of Chrysler's position and what steps the automaker has agreed to take.

In the document, Liddane states Chrysler's position that most of the crashes identified as reasons for a recall are "high-speed, high-energy collisions" that in most cases "would not have been prevented by taking any reasonable countermeasure steps" and would have occurred in similar makes and models under the same conditions.

He adds that "During the discussions between our staffs, we mutually identified an opportunity to incrementally improve the performance" of some of the subject vehicles in some types of low-speed rear-impact crashes.

While Liddane makes it clear that Chrysler still "does not agree that the risk of fuel leakage in low-speed impacts" for any of the vehicles in question "constitute a safety-related defect with-

in the meaning of the federal safety laws," Chrysler will conduct a voluntary safety recall of these units to offer owners of the affected ZJ and KJ platform Jeeps an upgrade to the rear structure of the vehicles by adding a trailer hitch "to better manage the crash forces" in low-speed impacts.

Owners will receive written notice of an opportunity to bring their Jeep in for a free inspection of the vehicle's rear structure, and, if the vehicle has no trailer hitch, a Chrysler trailer hitch will be installed free of charge, "provided the condition of the vehicle can support proper installation."

A Chrysler trailer hitch will also be installed if the vehicle is equipped with an aftermarket unit, again if the vehicle's condition supports proper installation. For any vehicle with an original equipment trailer hitch installed, the area around the hitch will be inspected, and if an installation problem is found, it will be resolved free of charge.

Jeep Grand Cherokee (WJ platform) model years 1999-2004 are not part of the safety recall; however, Chrysler has agreed to issue a customer satisfaction notice to owners, with an offer to inspect aftermarket trailer hitches for sharp edges or other puncture risks, and if necessary, replace them.

Chrysler plans to begin notifying dealers and owners of the voluntary recall in July.

Former GM Design VP Cherry Earns Lifetime Design Achievement Award

The 26th annual EyesOn Design weekend was held the weekend of June 14-16.

A special "Vision Honored Awards Dinner" honoring former GM designer Wayne Cherry was held at the GM Heritage Center in Sterling Heights June 14.

Bob Lutz presented the 2013 Lifetime Design Achievement Award trophy to Cherry.

A special "garage crawl" was held Saturday, June 15, where attendees were able to see the Lingenfelter Collection in Brighton.

On June 16, the day's festivities began with a special brunch at the Eleanor & Edsel Ford Estate, 1100 Lake Shore Drive in Grosse Pointe Shores.

The EyesOn Design Car Show - titled, "Revolution Over Evolution" - allowed attendees to see more than 200 classic vehicles that show off the best of Detroit car designs over the years.

Kathy Lightbody, media volunteer and spokesperson for the event, said that about 6,000 people attended all of the weekend events. Just under 5,000 visited the Ford estate on Sunday.

All proceeds from the show go to benefit the Detroit Institute of Ophthalmology (DIO).

Lightbody said that the final aim is to raise money for the DIO's 2013 Research Congress, which will take place Sept. 16-18 at The Henry Hotel in Dearborn.

GM Aspires to Play at Hall of Fame Level - GM's Akerson

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tage. Calling connectivity a "megatrend" is no exaggeration.

In a recent study, J.D. Power found that more than two-thirds of new-car buyers already own a smartphone. For 80 percent of them, connectivity strongly influences the new-car purchase decision.

"Personally, I think they're under-calling the market," Akerson said. "The number will be 100 percent before you know it. I only have to look at my youngest granddaughter to know it's inevitable. She's just wired differently than you or me. She thinks she can change TV channels just by swiping her hand across the screen. Anyway, when you ask drivers what kind of connectivity they want, they say, 'hands-free calling' or 'navigation' and 'automatic crash notification' in that order."

These features are the bread-and-butter of GM's OnStar unit, which has turned three simple buttons - one for calls, one for directions and one for emergencies - into a very successful business with more than 6 million subscribers, he said, adding that, when GM probed deeper, the automaker discovered that people really want connectivity to give them a better quality of life in their car.

Nearly 80 percent of consumers want greater safety, he said, followed by "a better driving experience" and better customer care. Translated, he added, people want connectivity

to keep them out of accidents and traffic jams, keep their cars from breaking down, and keep their kids entertained or at least occupied.

"And wouldn't your kids love to stream 'Fast and Furious 6' into the backseat instead of endlessly watching the same DVD for hours on end?" Akerson asked. "Some of this is possible today. Some is still years off. But all of it will require far more bandwidth and much higher download speeds."

In other words, he noted, GM needs a bigger pipe to bring data into the car - and that pipe is 4GLTE mobile broadband.

"This is one of those situations where past is prologue," Akerson said. "When I was with MCI and General Instruments back in the 1980s and 1990s, we had the biggest data pipes in telecom. Bar none. We used them to surprise and delight customers, and we created tremendous shareholder value in the process."

"At GM, we don't know everything that the future will bring. But the core of our strategy is to do a better job satisfying customers than anyone else. That's why we're going to turn millions of our cars and trucks into nodes on the Internet through the industry's largest global deployment of 4GLTE."

He pointed out that there will be safety improvements that come with this new technology.

"To me, there is nothing scarier than a texting driver looking

down at his handset," Akerson said. "But if done right, technology can actually be part of the solution to keeping drivers' eyes on the road. It all comes down to hardware and software design and execution. That's one of the great advantages of OnStar, which is fast becoming a global service."

To really "blow this out," he said, GM needs to borrow from the smartphone playbook and entice thousands of "codaholics" to write apps for its cars. Akerson said this is the strategy that made Apple and Android the dominant players in their space, and it's why GM is sharing its remote and in-vehicle application interfaces with third parties through a new website called developer.gm.com.

So far, Akerson pointed out, GM has about 2,000 registered users and its flexible app framework will help them help the company keep the technology in its vehicles at the cutting edge - even years after the sale.

Leading through innovation will help keep GM successful for generations to come, he said.

"We know we still have to get the fundamentals right," Akerson said. "That means designing great-looking vehicles, delivering outstanding quality and reliability and preserving our fortress balance sheet. But thanks to tenacity and a lot of hard work, we're now in a position to be expansive in our thinking and aggressive in our execution."



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