

# Oakland Tech News™

AUBURN HILLS AND ENVIRONS

VOL. 31 NO. 24

News of the Automotive, Technology and Supplier Community

JUNE 24, 2013

## Cherokee Badge Returns to Jeep with 'No Compromise'

by Irena Granaas

Bringing back the Cherokee badge to the midsize SUV market after a 12-year absence, the new 2014 Jeep Cherokee will arrive at dealer showrooms in the third quarter of 2013 with a base MSRP of \$22,995.

That is less than the price of the outgoing Jeep Liberty, which replaced the Cherokee in 2002, yet the new Cherokee, according to Chrysler buyers, will benefit from significantly improved fuel economy, more safety features and the addition of advanced technology.

"We call it the no-compromise Jeep," said Chrysler spokesperson Kathy Graham. "With some

older models, if customers wanted off-road capability, there was a weight penalty and a fuel economy penalty.

"The nice thing with this one is, they're still getting best-in-class capability, but it will also have great on-road ride characteristics and competitive fuel economy, so you're not giving anything up, even if you don't go off-road with it."

The 2014 Jeep Cherokee uses Fiat's CUS-WIDE platform (wide meaning wider than the European version), which is based off of the Dodge Dart platform from Fiat, which is derived from Fiat's Alfa Romeo Giulietta platform.

CONTINUED ON PAGE 2



2014 Jeep Cherokee

## Chrysler, NHTSA Resolve Request On Jeep Recall

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

CONTINUED ON PAGE 3



The OU robotics team with 'Replicant.' At left is advisor Dr. KaC Cheok.

## OU's 'Replicant' Robot Romps Past 41 Collegiate Teams

by Irena Granaas

With technical talent massed in the Detroit Metro area, the future course of autonomous vehicle technology is likely to have significant local input.

As if to illustrate that likelihood, the Oakland Robotics Association (ORA) representing Oakland University captured the top prize at the 21st annual Intel-

ligent Ground Vehicle Competition held recently on the university grounds.

After the dust settled, ORA and their robot, Replicant, ranked first among 42 collegiate teams from around the world, bringing the coveted Lescoe Cup home to Oakland University.

During the four-day challenge,

CONTINUED ON PAGE 2

## GM Quality Best Overall, Says J.D. Power Ford Led Way in Technology, Others Improved on It

by Jim Stickford

J.D. Power gave GM some good news last week.

That's when the market research firm, at the June 19 Automotive Press Association lunch at the Detroit Athletic Club, declared that GM did best overall among the top 25 OEMs in J.D. Power's Initial Quality Study (IQS) survey.

David Sargent, vice president, quality practice at J.D. Power, said the firm has been performing its IQS survey for 24 years. This year's study was a change from the one used since 2006.

The study, Sargent said, covers the first 90 days of vehicle ownership. The company selected about 83,000 new-car owners and contacted them by mail.

This year, the survey was done on the Internet. "This is the first time we've done that," Sargent said. "In the past, we had people fill out a questionnaire on paper and mail it back to us."

The reason J.D. Power came up with a new survey was, as technology in cars have changed, what bothers people has changed as well. For example, Sargent said, this year's survey had no questions on cassette players.

"The IQS focuses on 'design problems,'" Sargent said. "That's a problem that we consider designed into the vehicle causing something like wind noise or if technology is difficult to use."

"It's a poorly conceived design as opposed to a problem caused by a vehicle being poorly constructed. We're seeing about two-thirds of problems in new vehicles being design problems."

The IQS showed that 51 percent of respondents cared about reliability and 51 percent strongly cared about exterior styling, when naming top factors that influence buying a vehicle.

The study also showed that the top problem for new buyers is when voice recognition systems don't recognize voices. That was followed by Bluetooth/connectivity issues, excessive wind noise, interior materials scuffing and soiling too easily, and navigation systems being too hard to use.

Sargent said the OEMs use the data collected to determine where they are among the competition and where they need to make improvements. The public uses the information to help decide what cars and trucks to buy.

The customers who responded to the survey had 233 different problem symptoms to judge, Sargent said. The industry average for problems this year is 113 per 100 vehicles. GM had the top vehicle in eight categories. No other OEM had more than three.

"I find that an impressive accomplishment," Sargent said. He said the company really excelled in the large vehicle categories involving trucks, CUVs and SUVs.

The domestic OEM winners were:

City Car – Chevrolet Spark  
Midsize Sporty Car – Chevrolet Camaro (tie), Ford Mustang (tie)  
Large Car – Chevrolet Impala  
Subcompact CUV – Buick Encore (tie), Kia Sportage (tie)  
Minivan – Chrysler Town & Country  
Large CUV – Chevrolet Tahoe  
Large Premium CUV – Cadillac Escalade

Large Light-Duty Pickup – Chevrolet Avalanche (tie), GMC Sierra LD (tie)

Large Heavy-Duty Pickup – Chevrolet Silverado HD

Overall, GM had two of the top five brands, Sargent said. GMC finished second with 90 problems per 100 vehicles. Chevy finished fifth with a score of 97.

"GMC never finished higher than ninth, and now they're second," Sargent said.

The industry average was 113 problems per 100 vehicles. Cadillac beat that with a score of 108, Buick 109. Chrysler's score was 109 for 15th place. It was 25th last year. Jeep scored 118.

Sargent said Cadillac beating the industry average was impressive because newly-launched models have more problems.

On the other hand, models that have been out for a few years give OEMs time to fix problems. He said that was one of the reasons GM did well. The 2013 Sierra and Silverado are at the end of a six-year lifecycle, and GM has always done well improving models during a lifecycle.

Lincoln scored 113. Sargent said Ford makes good cars and trucks, but it led the way in technology, causing a higher score.

Systems like Ford's My Ford Touch came out first, he said, giving other OEMs a chance to see just what worked and what didn't.

"Ford basically took one for the team. Someone had to go first," Sargent said. "And the Ford F-150 is a good truck, but it had the bad luck this year to come up against the Sierra and

CONTINUED ON PAGE 3



Chevrolet Camaro



GMC Sierra



Chrysler Town & Country

Contact us at [news@oaklandtechnews.com](mailto:news@oaklandtechnews.com)