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Malibu to Offer Start/Stop Technology for Fuel Savings

The 2014 Chevrolet Malibu arriving in dealerships this fall will be the first midsize sedan sold in the U.S. to offer fuel-saving stop/start technology standard on its 2.5L base model, GM announced in a public statement.

Stop/start technology helps customers conserve fuel by automatically shutting off the engine when the car comes to a stop, such as at stoplights. The engine automatically restarts when the driver takes his or her foot off the brake. During engine restarts, an auxiliary 12-volt battery powers electric accessories such as heating and air conditioning, power windows and radio.

"The key was to apply the knowledge we gained from our eAssist technology," said Todd Pawlik, Malibu chief engineer. "By leveraging knowledge from the stop/start system we use on eAssist, we were able to significantly improve city fuel ratings by 3 mpg, or 14 percent, on Malibu's entry-level 2.5L model, compared to the 2013 model."

Malibu's stop/start system monitors – among other things – vehicle speed, climate control system operation and the force a driver applies to the brake pedal, to determine whether it is efficient to shut off the engine in certain driving conditions, such as stop-and-go driving.

In addition to stop/start technology, Chevrolet engineers incorporated valve-actuation technology known as Intake Valve Lift Control into Malibu's 2.5L engine, which also contributes to improved fuel economy.

When the Intake Valve Lift Control system operates in low-lift mode, the engine pumps only the air it needs to meet the driver's demand.

The system switches to high-lift mode at higher speeds or under heavy loads, providing the full output capability of the engine. The variable intake valve actuation enhances efficiency and helps lower emissions, while also boosting low-rpm torque for a greater feeling of power at lower speeds.

A new six-speed transmission makes its first appearance in the 2014 Malibu 2.5L. The 6T45 transmission includes improvements that reduce the energy required to pump transmission fluid, which enables additional fuel economy savings.

The new technologies on the 2.5L model enable the Malibu to deliver a higher combined fuel economy rating than the base engines of several midsize sedan competitors, including the Toyota Camry, Ford Fusion, Kia Optima, Hyundai Sonata and Chrysler 200.

2014 Chevrolet Malibu

"In this competitive midsize segment, there is no standing still," said Chris Perry, Chevrolet marketing vice president. "In addition to fuel economy improvements, the 2014 Malibu is roomier and more refined than its predecessor."

Additional new features on the 2014 Malibu include:

- Revised front-end appearance;
- Roomier rear seat with 1.25 inches more knee room;
- Redesigned center console;
- Available Side Blind Zone Alert and Rear Cross Traffic Alert safety features;

The 2014 Malibu is available in LS, LT and LTZ trim levels. The 2.5L engine base powertrain starts at $22,965 for the LS, $24,335 for the 1LT, $26,040 for the 2LT and $28,515 for the top LTZ trim. All suggested retail prices include an $825 destination charge, but exclude tax, title, license and dealer fees.

GM China Sales Reach 2 Million – Earliest Ever

General Motors and its joint ventures in China on Aug. 28 sold their 2 millionth vehicle in the year 2013.

This is the fourth consecutive year that GM's sales in China have reached 2 million units and the earliest GM has reached that point in the company's history.

Last year, GM sold its 2 millionth vehicle on Sept. 21. It became the first global automaker in China to reach the milestone in 2010.

"GM continues to introduce new and upgraded models in China," said GM China President Bob Socia. "This is enabling us to meet the needs of our customers and stay ahead of developments in our largest market."

In the first seven months of 2013, GM and its joint ventures sold a record 1,788,972 vehicles in China. Earlier this year, GM announced that its joint ventures would invest about $11 billion in China through 2016.

GM has 12 joint ventures, two wholly owned foreign enterprises and more than 58,000 employees in China. In 2012, GM sold more than 2.8 million vehicles in China. It's been the sales leader among global OEMs in the market for eight consecutive years.

TRW Buckles Down to Improve Seat Belts

To help remove some seat belt slack before a collision, TRW has designed a new anchor seat belt pretensioner in a rotary configuration.

The APR1, as it's known, is designed to deliver pretensioning forces of more than 3 kN, which can help to remove some seat belt slack within milliseconds of a crash being detected.

The APR1 features a lighter-weight design and more compact packaging resulting in an easy integration for vehicle manufacturer interiors.

Norbert Kagerer, vice president of Occupant Safety Systems Engineering, TRW Automotive Holdings Corp. of Livonia, pointed out, "The APR1 design offers vehicle manufacturers a number of options and advantages compared with existing systems.

"We are seeing strong interest globally for APR1 due to its packaging, weight and performance attributes.

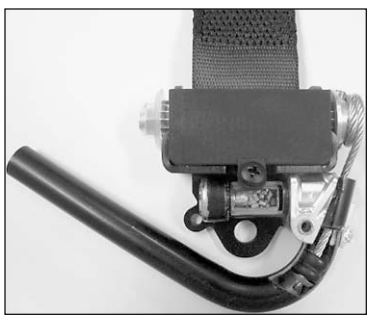
"The rotary design helps deliver enhanced pretensioning functionality and TRW is uniquely positioned to combine this technology with other occupant safety and active safety technologies to sense a crash and react to the unique characteristics of the crash."

There is no linkage element necessary in the new system and only the normal seat belt webbing will be visible in the vehicle cabin.

When combined with TRW's full spectrum of occupant protection seat belt and airbag options, the APR1 helps form the basis of advanced adaptive occupant technologies designed to help manage occupant energy in an unavoidable crash scenario, a TRW Automotive spokesman said.

For example, it can be combined with TRW's Active Control Retractor system or Active Buckle lifter to help remove some seatbelt slack before a crash occurs if a potential crash is detected by active vehicle sensors.

TRW is making this move to further strengthen its product portfolio, especially for challenging packaging situations, a spokesman said.



Rotary pretensioner

The APR1 will launch on several European platforms in 2015.

Hot-Selling Ford Fusion Now Built in U.S.

Supported by 1,400 new employees, the new Ford Fusion rolled off the line at Flat Rock Assembly Plant Aug. 29, marking the first time the popular car has been built in the United States.

In a news release, Ford stated that the move expands Fusion availability by more than 30 percent – up to 350,000 units annually – as the midsize sedan is setting sales records for Ford.

"With its bold design and great fuel economy, Fusion has exceeded all of our expectations, with demand outstripping supply," said Joe Hinrichs, Ford president of The Americas.

"Fusion in Flat Rock is a win for all of our stakeholders – including customers, employees and dealers. At the same time, Ford is continuing its massive investment in America by creating another 1,400 jobs."

The 1,400 new employees Ford hired to support added production at Flat Rock Assembly Plant puts the company more than 75 percent of the way toward its goal of creating 12,000 hourly jobs in the United States by 2015, Hinrichs said.

In 2013 alone, Ford is hiring nearly 6,500 new hourly and salaried employees in the U.S. to support products, growth and investment.

According to Ford, Fusion sales – up 13 percent in the U.S. this year – remain very strong. Through July, the automaker sold more than 181,000 Fusions, 21,000 more than were sold in the same period last year.

Fusion vehicles are selling in fewer than 20 days in such key markets as San Francisco, Los Angeles and Miami, compared with the industry average of approximately 60 days, according to the Ford news release.

The high-end Fusion Titanium is turning even faster in these markets – fewer than 15 days on dealer lots.

Demand for Fusion is growing as the sedan continues to win over buyers from other automakers, particularly Asian manufacturers with a competitive conquest rate of 50 percent, Hinrichs said.

The Fusion has earned accolades from customers and influential publications, winning seven major awards in its first nine months of production.

Hinrichs also said that the Fusion is the first sedan to offer gasoline, hybrid and plug-in hybrid powertrains, underscoring Ford's commitment to giving customers the power of choice.

Fusion Hybrid is EPA-certified with a best-in-class 47 mpg city, 47 mpg highway and 47 mpg combined fuel economy rating.

"We are thrilled to have added production of Fusion at Flat Rock Assembly Plant – not just for our dedicated workforce here, but for the entire metro Detroit community and the associated jobs it will create," said UAW Vice President Jimmy Settles.

"Together with the domestic automakers and through the collective bargaining process, we are able to bring jobs to the U.S. that were previously located offshore. Fusion production in Flat Rock is a key part of that."

In the announcment, Ford stated that to prepare Flat Rock's newest hires to build Fusion, a simulated factory has been introduced to provide hands-on training in a real-world environment. The simulated factory allows workers to master the tasks they may be performing on the line.

It also is expected to help reduce employee attrition and improve overall manufacturing and safety.

As part of a $555 million investment, Flat Rock Assembly plant has added a state-of-the-art, fully flexible body shop to allow multiple models to be produced on the same assembly line, supporting Ford's flexible manufacturing efforts.

"We have completely transformed Flat Rock Assembly Plant to help prepare for Fusion production," said Tim Young, Flat Rock's plant manager. "These upgrades have allowed us to ensure we are building the highest-quality cars."

Ford stated that it also has upgraded the plant's paint shop with installation of its three-wet paint process. It is more environmentally friendly and takes less time than conventional paint processes, without compromising vehicle paint quality or durability.

Other technologies incorporated at Flat Rock include laser brazing, a form of welding that will be used on Fusion to attach the roof of the car to the body with a high-quality, aesthetically pleasing seam.