

# Tech Center News™

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## Camaro Z/28 Runs Circles Around Lamborghini and Porsche

It's been said a good car can "run rings" around the competition.

That certainly was the case in mid-September when the 2014 Camaro Z/28 turned in a 7:37.40 lap time around the famed Nürburgring road course in Germany.

Chevrolet officials, on Oct. 15, revealed a video of the new 2014 Camaro Z/28 lapping the Nürburgring road course in a time comparable with some of the world's most prestigious sports cars, said GM spokesman Monte Doran.

The Z/28's lap is four seconds faster than the Camaro ZL1, and beats published times for the Porsche 911 Carrera S and the

Lamborghini Murcielago LP640, Doran said.

The Z/28's lap was completed in less-than-ideal conditions, with damp pavement and pouring rain near the end of the run.

"One of the challenges of testing at the 'Ring' is that the track is so long that conditions can change radically in a single lap," said Al Oppenheiser, Camaro chief engineer.

"Adam Dean, the development driver for Z/28, did a heroic job driving in deteriorating conditions. Based on telemetry data from our test sessions, we know the Z/28 can be as much as six seconds faster on a dry track."

In terms of lap times, the Z/28's improved speed came from three

areas, according to GM officials:

- Increased grip – The Z/28 is capable of a 1.08 g-force in cornering acceleration, due to comprehensive chassis revisions;

- Increased stopping power – The Z/28 features Brembo carbon-ceramic brakes capable of a 1.5 g-force in deceleration, and consistent brake feel lap after lap;

- Reduced curb weight – The naturally aspirated Z/28 weighs 300 pounds less than the supercharged Camaro ZL1, with changes ranging from lightweight wheels to thinner rear-window glass.

The heart of the Z/28 is the



The 2014 Camaro Z/28 in Germany.

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## WID Promotes STEM to Local High School Girls

by Jim Stickford

The Michigan Chapter of Women In Defense (WID) is looking for a few good women to consider majoring in Science, Technology, Engineering and Math (STEM).

To that end, WID on Oct. 15 took 32 female students on a tour of the RAVE Cave, a facility in Sterling Heights that creates a 3-D environment in which engineers can test prototype vehicles in a simulated environment.

Denise Gerstenberg is the local WID chapter's STEM director. Her day job is City Development manager for Sterling Heights. She said WID is interested in helping develop the next generation of defense industry leaders, especially women.

"So every year we try to put on a field trip to a defense-related business to show young women what's out there for them," Gerstenberg said. "Two years ago, we visited General Dynamics, and last year we visited BAE Systems. This year, it's the RAVE Cave. And there will be a tour of Wyle, a company that provides tech services to life science and information service industries."

Wyle is located in the same building complex as the RAVE Cave, Gerstenberg said.

The Army's TARDEC had people at the RAVE event to show the students how the Army uses the facility to test its vehicles.

"The students came from a variety of schools," Gerstenberg said, "including Utica, Newaygo and Mount Clemens public schools. Altogether, we had 32 young ladies attend. We could have five field trips worth of women go to this event, but we can only have five to seven people at a time in the RAVE Cave, so we had to limit the number of people we could take."

The students who attended the event are all in high school, Gerstenberg said. The president of RAVE Cave, Art Adlam, spoke to the ladies. And, they got to meet with two women – Doris Block-Tomlinson, CEO of Danas Technology, and Rosemary Bayer, founder of Ardent Cause – who have started their own defense-related businesses.



GM's Dan Akeron unveils the 2015 CNG-capable, bi-fuel Impala.

## 'Franchise Dealer System Benefits Consumer' – NADA Chief

by Jim Stickford

It took hundreds of billions of dollars to build the franchise car dealer system and it would cost hundreds of billions of dollars more to develop something to replace it – and the big loser, if that should happen, would be the consumer.

That was the message from David Westcott, chairman of the National Automobile Dealers Association at the recent Automotive Press Association luncheon at the Detroit Athletic Club.

In his address to the media, Westcott said that getting rid of the franchise system would eliminate something that really benefits the consumer – competition.

The franchise system allows 30 manufacturers to sell 300 different models.

"We dealers are mostly small businesses – men and women who, on average, employ about 50 people from our local community. We spend our days and nights competing with each other. This keeps us customer-focused.

"If manufacturers were allowed to squeeze out the independent dealers, the competition we create will give way to a handful of national and international corporations controlling pricing in your local community because there will no longer be intra-brand competition."

He said that's not meant to be a shot against "our hometown" automakers. He said he believes that after trying alternatives to the franchise system a decade ago, the U.S. OEMs are happy to rely on the franchise system.

"They recognize and appreci-

ate that the franchise system provides the framework and stability for an industry that accounts for almost a trillion dollars in commerce each year," Westcott said. "The franchise system creates competition and the consumer is the primary beneficiary. That's why all 50 states have enacted some sort of a dealer franchise law."

And as small, local businesses, franchise dealers play an important role in the local economy.

"The auto industry continues to lead the economic recovery," Westcott said.

"Auto sales are approaching pre-recession levels, and at this rate, dealers may end up selling

close to 16 million new vehicles this year."

These franchise dealers are close to again employing 1 million people in the country with jobs that can't be exported overseas. But even though things are looking up, dealers have their share of challenges, Westcott said.

While many in the public still hold stereotyped views of new-car dealers, Westcott said that, according to J.D. Power, customer satisfaction with dealerships is at an all-time high.

Any system that would replace the franchise way of doing things

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## New Lab to Give Ford a 'Stepping Stone' Between Battery Research and Production

A new \$8 million battery lab opened Oct. 14 at the University of Michigan that will help Ford develop batteries that are smaller, lighter and less expensive to produce.

The research at the new lab could accelerate development of batteries that are more efficient and affordable than the batteries used in today's models, allowing vehicles to go farther on a single charge, said Ford spokesperson Amanda Zusman.

The lab is a battery manufacturing facility designed to support pilot projects. State-of-the-art manufacturing methods will be used to make test batteries that replicate the performance of full-scale production batteries, allowing for faster implementa-

tion in future production vehicles, Zusman said.

"We have battery labs that test and validate production-ready batteries, but that is too late in the development process for us to get our first look," said Ted Miller, who manages battery research for Ford.

"This lab will give us a stepping-stone between the research lab and the production environment, and a chance to have input much earlier in the development process. This is sorely needed, and no one else in the auto industry has anything like it."

The lab is the result of collaboration between Ford, battery suppliers, the University of Michigan, and the state and federal governments, and it holds

the potential for major advancements in extending battery life and durability, said Zusman.

Ford, the only automaker to invest in the facility, contributed \$2.1 million. Other investors include the University of Michigan, the Michigan Economic Development Corporation and the U.S. Department of Energy.

Ford has been supporting battery research for more than 20 years, Zusman said. Last year, the company invested \$135 million in design, engineering and production of key battery components, and doubled its battery testing capabilities.

Ford was able to accelerate durability testing, with test bat-

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David Westcott

Contact us: [info@techcenternews.com](mailto:info@techcenternews.com)