

Extended Winter Reduces GM, Ford Sales; Chrysler's Discounts Boost Final Results

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TrueCar, said automaker spending on discounts is growing faster than average sales prices, but he predicted that the bargains will wane as the weather gets warmer and customers go shopping again.

"We expect a return to balance once the winter subsidies and inventories ease," he said.

GM officials said the automaker sold more than 222,000 cars and trucks, led by the Chevrolet Cruze compact car, with sales up almost 22 percent. But sales of the Chevy Silverado pickup, GM's top-selling vehicle, fell 12 percent for the month.

Ford sold nearly 184,000 vehicles, but sales of cars fell almost 14 percent. Sales of the F-Series pickup, its top-selling vehicle,

rose just less than 3 percent.

Toyota sales fell 4 percent to a little more than 159,000 cars and truck

"We expect a return to balance once the winter subsidies and inventories ease."

**— Larry Dominique
VP, TrueCar**

Chrysler was able to lure customers onto icy-cold dealer lots by offering discounts and lower-

ing prices on some key models.

The automaker's sales rose 11 percent to nearly 155,000, led by the Ram pickup with a 26 percent sales gain.

Chrysler's average sale price was up 6 percent, as it boosted discounts on the Ram pickup, its most popular model of truck, by \$593 compared to that same time a year ago, according to data collected by J.D. Power and Associates.

The Ram discounts averaged just under \$5,000. On the other hand, Ford and General Motors, its main competitors in the truck market, offered around \$4,000 per pickup.

Despite the Ram increase, discounts in the pickup segment were down \$548 compared with a year ago, according to the J.D. Power data.

Sales 'Surged in Final Week,' Said Ford VP John Felice

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coln's fifth straight month of positive sales gains, with double-digit gains in four of these five months.

Over the last five months, Lincoln sold 34,476 vehicles, representing a 26 percent increase over the same period one year ago.

"Sales surged in the final week, providing us momentum after a slow start to the month," said John Felice, Ford vice president, U.S. Marketing, Sales and Service.

"Ford Fusion continued its strong retail sales performance in the West, outpacing the mid-size sedan segment.

"F-Series and Lincoln also continued to perform well."

Ford Motor Company fleet

sales were off 10 percent in February, as winter weather again delayed a portion of fleet orders. The volumes are anticipated to be made up in March.

"F-Series had a great month, it was up 3 percent with over almost 56,000 vehicles sold and that was our best February in eight years," Merkle said. "It's a very solid number for F-Series.

"We've had sales increases for five straight months with Lincoln and four out of those five have been double digits.

"The two vehicles really that are driving it right now are one, MKZ, of course, with the new vehicle, and then also the MKX is really helping propel those Lincoln volumes, but the momentum seems to be carrying through into this year."

Merkle said he thought overall

industry February sales are indicating that 2014 will be a strong year, saleswise.

"Our drop in sales," Merkle said, "part of it was weather-related, not so much to sales, but our ability to produce and fill our fleet orders for the month of February, so we had to take about 10,000 orders for February and move them forward into March."

Merkle said the industry always likes to get January and February behind them because historically they are a couple of the weaker sales months.

"March looks like it's setting up to be a good month for the industry," Merkle said.

So, despite sales declining compared with last year, Merkle said he doesn't see the second month of this year changing their guidance moving forward.

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