

North American Automotive Plants Operating at 90 Percent

By TOM KRISHER
AP Auto Writer

DETROIT (AP) – Auto sales are growing so fast that Detroit can barely keep up.

Three years after the U.S. auto industry nearly collapsed, sales of cars and trucks are surging. Sales could exceed 14 million this year, above last year's 12.8 million.

The result: Carmakers are adding shifts and hiring thousands of workers around the U.S. Carmakers and parts companies added more than 38,000 jobs last year, with industry employment averaging 717,000 for 2011. And automakers have announced plans to add another 13,000 this year, mostly on night shifts.

But there's a downside. The newfound success is straining the factory network of the Detroit automakers, as well as the companies that make the thousands of parts that go into each vehicle. This could lead to shortages that drive up prices.

And it also has auto execu-

tives in a quandary. They got into trouble in the first place largely because their costs were too high. Now, they fear adding too many workers.

Ford, for instance, is "squeezing every last component, transmission, engine out of the existing brick and mortar," says Jim Tetreault, vice president of North America manufacturing.

Still, the hiring surge bolsters the argument of those who supported the federal bailout of General Motors and Chrysler in 2008 and 2009.

And the hiring is good news for communities around the country that saw hundreds of thousands of manufacturing jobs disappear. Starting in 2005, GM, Ford and Chrysler closed 28 factories and eliminated 88,000 jobs. Parts companies cut another 234,000.

Now, if sales hit 15 million by 2015, as some experts predict, the three Detroit automakers could hire another 20,000 people, predicts Sean McAlinden, chief economist for the Center for Automotive Research in Ann Arbor, Michigan.

"You can only squeeze so

much out of the same amount of people," says Itay Michaeli, an auto analyst at Citi Investment Research.

Laurie Schmald Moncrieff, president of a small parts-manufacturing company near Flint, Mich., says when demand for auto parts collapsed a few years ago, she shifted production to parts for companies in green energy, aerospace and defense.

Now, automakers and other parts suppliers have her on speed dial, trying to line up everything from fuel pump parts to tools that make hoses. She just added six workers and may hire another five. "I see tremendous growth coming in the near-term," she says.

Like many parts suppliers, she's having trouble finding people with the skills to run machinery in her plant.

The hiring binge couldn't have happened at a better time for Michigan. Many of the new auto jobs came around the Great Lakes where the Detroit Big Three have most of their factories.

But in a state where unem-

ployment was above 14 percent just three years ago, any jobs are welcome. And Michigan is not the only region to benefit. Ford is adding positions in Louisville, Kentucky, Chicago and near Kansas City, Missouri. Chrysler is adding jobs in Belvidere, Illinois, and General Motors is hiring at plants in Tennessee, Kentucky, Texas and New York.

New jobs with auto companies don't pay as well as the old ones. Under union con-

tracts, companies can pay new hires around \$16 per hour, a little more than half the pay of longtime workers.

Foreign carmakers are also shifting production to the U.S. because of higher sales and the weak dollar, which cuts the profits they get from selling vehicles exported to America. Nissan is adding workers in Tennessee. Toyota just hired staff at a new plant in Blue Springs, Mississippi. Honda is hiring in Alabama

and Ohio. Hyundai and Kia plants in Alabama and Georgia are running flat-out but can't meet demand for some models such as the Hyundai Sonata and Elantra.

The sales rebound comes with risks that are familiar to Detroit. Crank up production too much and carmakers have to sell vehicles at deep discounts. Boost production too little, and companies could run short of vehicles such as pickup trucks.



The 2013 bi-fuel Chevrolet Silverado HD includes a compressed natural gas (CNG) capable engine that seamlessly transitions between CNG and gasoline fuel systems. Combined, the truck offers a range of more than 650 miles.



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GM Partners with Wells Fargo on Sales

DETROIT – General Motors Co. and Wells Fargo & Co. have created a long-term partnership to offer competitive financing to Chevrolet, Buick, GMC and Cadillac dealers and retail customers in the contiguous states comprising GM's U.S. West marketing region.

"Our relationship with Wells Fargo further improves GM's competitiveness by expanding the financing options we can offer to our dealers and customers," said Mark Reuss, president of GM North America.

Wells Fargo will offer GM dealers a complete suite of products alongside the core offering of retail subvention. These offerings will include non-subsented retail loans, and financing solutions for GM dealers, such as wholesale floor plan and other financing, treasury services and insurance.

"Our new relationship with General Motors will help expand our significant footprint in the West through improved access to GM's large dealer and customer network," said Tom Wolfe, head of Wells Fargo Consumer Credit Solutions. "It will fuel growth in our auto finance business, an area in which we are looking to expand."

The Wells Fargo relationship will complement GM's captive offerings through GM Financial, its extensive relationship with Ally, and its leasing program with U.S. Bank.

"This partnership represents another step forward in our strategy to ensure our dealers and customers have consistently available, transparent and competitive financing," said GM Senior Vice President and Chief Financial Officer Dan Ammann.

Meanwhile, Wells Fargo & Company is a nationwide, diversified, community-based financial services company with \$1.3 trillion in assets.

Founded in 1852 and headquartered in San Francisco, Wells Fargo provides banking, insurance, investments, mortgage, and consumer and commercial finance through more than 9,000 stores, 12,000 ATMs, the Internet (wellsfargo.com), and other distribution channels across North America and internationally. With more than 270,000 team members, Wells Fargo serves one in three households in America.

Wells Fargo & Company was ranked No. 23 on Fortune's 2011 rankings of America's largest corporations.

Wells Fargo's vision is to satisfy all our customers' financial needs and help them succeed financially.

GM Expands Its Bi-Fuel Silverado and Sierra Pickup Truck Customer Options

DETROIT – Chevrolet and GMC today announced details of General Motors' bi-fuel 2013 Chevrolet Silverado and GMC Sierra 2500 HD extended cab pickup trucks. Fleet and retail consumers can place orders beginning this April.

The vehicles include a compressed natural gas (CNG) capable Vortec 6.0L V8 engine that seamlessly transitions between CNG and gasoline fuel systems. Combined, the trucks offer a range of more than 650 miles. The Silverado and Sierra will be available in standard and long box, with either two- or four-wheel drive.

"The bi-fuel Chevy Silverado and GMC Sierra provide customers with choices in advanced propulsion technology, and because CNG is a clean-burning, domestically produced fuel, it has wide appeal," said Ed Peper, general

manager, GM Fleet and Commercial Operations.

"The addition of a full-size bi-fuel pickup truck to GM's fleet portfolio is another milestone in putting the customer first in everything we do – by offering great products, innovative solutions and a great customer experience."

GM is the only manufacturer to offer a single-source option for its gaseous fuel vehicles. The bi-fuel trucks are built with a specially designed engine, the fuel system is installed by GM's Tier One supplier and the completed vehicle is delivered directly to the customer. This process makes ordering the bi-fuel option as seamless and efficient as a standard vehicle.

"The bi-fuel truck provides businesses with added re-fueling flexibility and eases consumer range concerns that typically come with CNG, all

while reducing emissions and controlling costs," said Joyce Mattman, director, GM Commercial Product and Specialty Vehicles.

"This turnkey ordering process, combined with the best warranty in the industry for a commercial product, makes our bi-fuel truck an attractive option, especially for commercial customers."

The bi-fuel commercial trucks will be covered by GM's three-year, 36,000-mile new vehicle limited warranty and five-year, 100,000-mile limited powertrain warranty and vehicle emissions warranty, meeting all Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) and California Air Resources Board (CARB) emission certification requirements. It is the most extensive warranty offered by any manufacturer on commercial products.

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<h3>2012 CRUZE</h3> <p>Stock #420523</p> <p>10 AIR BAGS</p> <p>Deal #159761 Stock #420169</p> <p>\$0 DOWN at Lessee Signing</p> <p>EVERYONE'S SALE PRICE \$15,779^{95*}</p> <p>24 MO. LEASE \$174*</p>	<h3>WOW! 2012 TAHOE Z71</h3> <p>★★★★★ DEMO</p> <p>Order #CC10706</p> <p>Stock #G511708</p> <p>\$2,000 Due at Lessee Signing</p> <p>GM EMPLOYEE PRICE \$45,286*</p> <p>39 MO. LEASE \$509*</p>	<h3>LACROSSE</h3> <p>2011 Was \$27,745 Order #PMSNJH</p> <p>2012 Deal #162626 Stock #B420016</p> <p>EVERYONE'S SALE PRICE \$21,156^{00*}</p> <p>24 MO. LEASE \$192^{94*} 10K Miles/Yr.</p>	<h3>VERANO</h3> <p>Was \$23,470 Order #B420624</p> <p>2012 Deal #162616</p> <p>GM EMPLOYEE PRICE \$22,734^{24*}</p> <p>39 MO. LEASE \$216^{05*} 12K Miles/Yr.</p>		
<h2>CHEVY TRUCK MONTH • GMC TRUCK MONTH</h2>		<h3>2012 SILVERADO 4WD EXT. CAB</h3> <p>Order #CK10753</p> <p>Deal #159773</p> <p>\$2,000 Due at Lessee Signing</p> <p>EVERYONE'S SALE PRICE \$25,880*</p> <p>24 MO. LEASE \$221*</p>	<h3>2012 TRAVERSE</h3> <p>Stock #520688</p> <p>Deal #160545</p> <p>\$995 Down at Lessee Signing</p> <p>EVERYONE'S SALE PRICE \$25,609*</p> <p>24 MO. LEASE \$237*</p>	<h3>ACADIA</h3> <p>2011 Was \$32,810 Order #PNVDP</p> <p>2012 Deal #162544 Order #PVRVHR</p> <p>EVERYONE'S SALE PRICE \$25,724^{80*}</p> <p>24 MO. LEASE \$246^{72*} 10K Miles/Yr.</p>	<h3>ENCLAVE</h3> <p>2011 Was \$40,700 Stock #B510365</p> <p>2012 Deal #162640 Order #PWFTHR</p> <p>EVERYONE'S SALE PRICE \$29,422^{35*}</p> <p>24 MO. LEASE \$317^{79*} 10K Miles/Yr.</p>
<h3>2012 EQUINOX</h3> <p>Stock #520842</p> <p>Deal #162624</p> <p>\$0 DOWN at Lessee Signing</p> <p>EVERYONE'S SALE PRICE \$22,331*</p> <p>39 MO. LEASE \$259*</p>	<h3>2012 SILVERADO 4WD CREW CAB</h3> <p>Order #CK10543</p> <p>Deal #159781</p> <p>\$2,000 Due at Lessee Signing</p> <p>EVERYONE'S SALE PRICE \$28,057*</p> <p>24 MO. LEASE \$247*</p>	<h3>TERRAIN</h3> <p>2012 Was \$28,040 Stock #G520060</p> <p>2012 Deal #162579 Stock #G520629</p> <p>EVERYONE'S SALE PRICE \$24,116^{0*}</p> <p>39 MO. LEASE \$213^{20*} 12K Miles/Yr.</p>	<h3>SIERRA EXT CAB</h3> <p>2011 Was \$26,390 Order #NZVRGP</p> <p>2012 Deal #162588 Order #PXFDS2</p> <p>EVERYONE'S SALE PRICE \$18,554^{76*}</p> <p>24 MO. LEASE \$190^{92*} 10K Miles/Yr.</p>		

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* All prices & payments include GM rebates. Pictures may not represent actual vehicle. Prices subject to change per GM incentives. Prices and payments are inclusive of GM Employee Discount (Unless otherwise stated). Lease terms vary from 24 to 48 months, 10,000 miles per year w/ approved S Tier credit w/ \$1995 due at signing, (unless otherwise noted). Prices & payments are plus tax, title, and plate fees. 0% Financing in lieu of some factory rebates. Malibu LS (leased thru GM Financial), Equinox LS, Cruze LS leases require 800 plus credit score. Must qualify for Conquest. Some vehicles may be Courtesy cars. Expires 3-30-12.