

Detroit Auto Scene

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Chevy Cruze Tops Small Car Sales

LORDSTOWN, Ohio (AP) – The Ohio-built Chevrolet Cruze was the top-selling small car in the United States for the month of September.

General Motors says it sold 25,787 Cruzes last month. They're built in GM's Lordstown plant near Youngstown.

The Cruze's nearest competitor in the sector was the Toyota Corolla, with 23,036 sold last month.

Sales of the Cruze dropped by 188 from the sales record set in August. Still, GM says last month was its best overall September since 2008.

White, Silver High on List Of Car Buyers' Preferences

By DEE-ANN DURBIN
 AP Auto Writer

DETROIT (AP) – If you bought a new vehicle this year, chances are high it was white or silver.

Twenty-two percent of cars and trucks built for the 2012 model year have white paint, making it the most popular color worldwide. Silver is close behind, at 20 percent, followed by black at 19 percent. Gray and red follow to round out the top five.

White is the most popular color for the second year in a row after overtaking silver in 2011. The annual rankings are compiled by automotive paint supplier PPG Industries Inc., a Pittsburgh-based company that provides paints to General Motors Co., Ford Motor Co., BMW AG and others.

The rankings are skewed somewhat by the large number of pickup trucks on the market. Trucks accounted for 55 percent of North American production in the first eight months of this year, according to Ward's, which compiles automotive data. One in four pickups produced is white because business owners often use them as work trucks and paint logos on them. By comparison, 19 percent of midsize cars made in North America are white.

White, which was also popular in the 1980s, is making a comeback as a modern, high-tech color thanks in part to Apple Inc.'s all-white stores and glossy white gadgets, said Jane Harrington, PPG's manager of color

styling for car companies. Manufacturers are also making more varieties of white, from the flat, bright white on many vans to the pearly cream of luxury SUVs.

Silver also rose in popularity as a high-tech color starting in the 2000s, and remains an especially popular choice in Asia. It remains in vogue because it highlights every angle of a car, Harrington said.

"Silver looks great on any design," Harrington said.

White and other "safe" colors – silver, gray and black – also got more popular during the economic downturn, as buyers stopped leasing and bought vehicles they expected to hold on to for much longer, said Michelle Killen, GM's lead color designer for exterior paints. They were leery of some of the more daring colors on the market, like the magenta available on the Ford Fiesta or the bright orange on the Scion iQ.

"Buyers want to purchase a color they won't grow tired of over an extended period of time," Killen said.

Color preferences vary by geography. You'll find more red vehicles in North America. Black and gray overtake silver in popularity in Europe. Drivers in Asia like tan and gold but not green. Only about 7 percent of cars in every region are blue.

PPG, which also develops paints for cell phones, laptops, airplanes and houses, bases its automotive paints on trends it sees in fashion, interior design and other areas.

Fuel-Saving System Debuts on New 2013 Dodge Dart, Ram 1500 Trucks

AURORA, Ontario, Canada – Magna International Inc. has announced that its Magna Exteriors and Interiors (MEI) operating unit has started production of its Active Grille Shutter (AGS).

The AGS is a louver system that blocks various front-end airflow openings, reducing drag while maintaining optimal engine temperatures.

Reduced drag is a key factor for improving vehicle gas mileage.

Building on the auto industry's initial research into grille shutter systems, MEI developed and commercialized this new product offering in 18 months, a rapid development cycle made possible by the company's expertise as a leading supplier of automotive front-end modules and fascias.

The system's louvers, functioning like household blinds, automatically open and close based on various inputs from the vehicle.

Under conditions that produce moderate engine temperatures – for example, when a vehicle is traveling at highway speeds – the louvers are closed, which directs airflow around the vehicle, re-

ducing drag and enabling fuel efficiency improvements.

For situations such as sitting in hot traffic, traveling uphill or pulling a trailer, the shutters remain open and allow air to flow into the engine compartment for optimal engine cooling.

"Nearly every passenger vehicle introduced in upcoming years will have some kind of active shutter system," said Bob Brownlee, president of Magna Exteriors and Interiors.

"With the development of our Active Grille Shutter, we have been able to quickly meet automakers' rising demand for a well-engineered, high-quality system that helps address rising fuel-economy standards and the need to reduce vehicle emissions."

After making its debut on the 2013 Dodge Dart and Ram 1500 pickup truck, Magna's AGS will be included on four additional upcoming vehicles, with more expected to follow.

Magna's system is applicable for any vehicle segment, including pickup trucks and SUVs, which typically receive the highest benefit in reduced fuel consumption.

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