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Dodge Durango Put to the Test to Ensure Reliability, Durability and Performance

- Durango platform tested for 13.5 million miles
- During initial launch, 60 to 100 newly built vehicles are road-tested each day at Jefferson North Assembly Plant

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Chrysler Group engineers put the 2011 Dodge Durango to the test, actually thousands of tests, to ensure its performance and reliability for the long haul.

"The Dodge Durango was designed, developed and built with quality as a top priority at every stage of the process," said Doug Betts, Senior Vice President-Quality, Chrysler Group LLC. "For example, we have increased the precision and the number of evaluations for fit-and-finish, making adjustments starting with the early digital design phase. Additionally, our engineers benchmark hundreds of criteria to set and achieve aggressive targets for performance against competitors."

SURVIVING A 13.5-MILLION MILE ROAD TRIP

Beginning with the all-new models developed for the 2011 model year, Chrysler Group has significantly increased the number of reliability testing miles. Engineers tested the new Durango for the equivalent of 6 million miles during its reliability and durability evaluation in the company's scientific labs, at the proving grounds and on public roads in various climates. This builds upon the 7.5 million testing miles of the Durango's platform mate, Jeep Grand Cherokee, for a total of 13.5 million miles for the company's redesigned SUV platform.

"The all-new Durango builds on a successful platform," said Jack Dolan, Model Responsible, Durango Engineering. "Customers can rest assured that we drove it and validated its performance in the most strenuous of conditions."

For example, the team validated Durango on hot trips through the burning Arizona desert, the various elevations of West Virginia, the infamous "Tail of The Dragon" winding roads in North Carolina and in the frigid temperatures of northern Minnesota.

Within the Chrysler Technology Center's state-of-the-art scientific labs in the Auburn Hills, Mich., the Durango went through a battery of tests in the Acoustic Lab, the Noise, Vibration and Harshness (NVH) Lab, the Electromagnetic Compatibility Facility, the Wind Tunnel and the Road Test Simulator (RTS).

The Durango was subjected to a punishing series of tests on the RTS. The RTS replicates a wide range of on-road and off-road driving surfaces. It recreates the abuse vehicles endure at the hands of a 95th percentile customer - meaning a customer who drives the vehicle in more severe conditions than 95 percent of all owners.

"This simulates much more than a Sunday drive," Dolan explained. "The Road Test Simulator puts a lifetime of wear-and-tear on a vehicle in about one month's time. The Durango is a solid, tight vehicle that performs well beyond customer expectations."

The new Pentastar V-6 engine also underwent 50 percent more engine testing than previous V-6 engines to guarantee a long life and ensure it will perform well in high load conditions.

BUILDING QUALITY INTO EVERY VEHICLE

Chrysler Group has adopted new manufacturing quality processes from its global alliance partner Fiat as part of the World Class Manufacturing (WCM) initiative. To help consistently execute these standards, the Jefferson North Assembly Plant (JNAP) in Detroit, where the Durango is built, is the first Chrysler Group assembly plant to house a

Metrology Center.

The Metrology Center is a new 20,000-square-foot space within the body shop dedicated to verifying the fit of each body component and how well it conforms to the design requirement. The tools can verify the fits of the sheet-metal structure and interior components to extreme tolerances.

This methodology has been used throughout the Fiat system in recent years to better enforce strict quality standards. JNAP is the first Chrysler Group facility, and one of only a few North American automotive manufacturing facilities, to have this equipment.

CONTINUED TESTING AT THE END OF THE LINE

Quality inspections do not end once Dodge Durango SUVs reach the end of the assembly line. During the initial launch, 60 to 100 newly-built vehicles are randomly selected and driven up to 60 miles in a final validation test to make sure the customer doesn't get any unwanted surprises.

A team of 20 test drivers examines the vehicles, driving the Durangos on different road surfaces at varying speeds. The drivers also scrutinize functional aspects of each vehicle, such as heating and ventilation systems, storage compartments and window operation. The test drivers were intentionally chosen from diverse backgrounds to represent customers of different ages, sizes and ethnicities.

"Chrysler Group has transformed its approach to quality in recent years," Betts said. "We're demonstrating our commitment with a significant increase in people and resources devoted to quality. The commitment extends to our customers - making a vehicle they can be proud to recommend to friends and family."

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