

Contact: Trevor Dorchies
Kristin Starnes

Good isn't Good Enough: Dodge Team Enhances Durango Quality

March 27, 2013, New York City - The thoroughly redesigned 2011 Dodge Durango led the Dodge brand's recent product assault, generating high marks for customer satisfaction and recommendations from numerous consumer magazines.

Some might think the Durango team had earned the privilege to relax and enjoy the accolades – but the Dodge product team isn't resting on its laurels.

"We now have a culture of continuous improvement at Dodge. We're always looking for ways to improve our products, even while the current model is still fresh in the marketplace," Doug Betts, Senior Vice President — Quality, Chrysler Group, explained. "We're doing more than an appearance update, making significant investments to upgrade the powertrain, completely changing the electrical architecture and enhancing all the interior features the driver sees and touches."

Key updates for the 2014 Dodge Durango include an eight-speed automatic transmission to improve performance and fuel economy, plus the newest Uconnect system that balances advanced technology and connectivity features with easy-to-use controls and voice commands. Additionally, the vehicle offers an enhanced video and entertainment system, which now features two 9-inch screens mounted to the front-row seat backs. The separate screens display a higher resolution picture that supports Blu-ray video or video games, and passengers decide whether to watch the same entertainment or choose separate activities on their personal screens.

From the driver's seat, everything the driver sees, touches, and even speaks, using voice commands, is enhanced to increase functionality, connectivity and responsiveness. Not only does it work better, it looks better packaged in more premium materials and elegant graphics. This includes a redesigned steering wheel that is optimized for driving position while also providing control buttons for frequently used features like radio, cruise control, phone and voice-activated commands. The Dodge team took copious notes on customer habits to determine the ideal location for fingertip controls so that drivers could comfortably keep their hands on the wheel and eyes on the road.

Another significant interior change for Dodge Durango is the availability of the new Uconnect Access 8.4-inch touchscreen. Connectivity and touchscreens involve rapidly changing technology and ever-increasing consumer expectations – both of which have a significant impact on the overall quality assessment of new vehicles. The Uconnect team constantly evaluates consumer feedback, placing a high priority on designing systems that are intuitive for both tech-savvy customers, as well as tech-averse drivers.

The prior model Durango was one of the first Dodge vehicles to undergo Chrysler Group's revamped validation testing requirements, racking up twice as many testing miles as previous new vehicle launches. This added testing proved so valuable the company continued the public-road reliability testing after the market launch. Each month, five random vehicles from every Chrysler Group model line are pulled off the assembly line so they can be driven day and night to accumulate miles as part of the ongoing effort to find and fix any issues before customers do.

The 2014 Dodge Durango will continue to be built at Jefferson North Assembly Plant (JNAP) in Detroit, using World Class Manufacturing (WCM) principles that involve all employees in the manufacturing process for continuous process and quality improvement. To achieve world-class fit-and-finish standards, Durango bodies and components will undergo inspection in the state-of-the-art Metrology Center. JNAP was the first Chrysler Group plant to build a Metrology Center, where highly-precise dimensional control tools can find sources of build variation – even when components appear perfect to the naked eye.

"We're constantly collecting customer feedback, benchmarking competitors, and raising the bar related to our quality

targets,” Betts explained. “The 2014 Durango and its numerous updates are evidence of Dodge’s commitment to customer satisfaction.”

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