

NEWS



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For more information:
Barbara Pomerance
1.800.697.7574

Fast Tracks from The Washington Auto Show®:

Buyers Vote 'Yes' for Luxury Cars

WASHINGTON, D.C. (Dec. 10, 2004) -- Buyers have always wanted luxury in their vehicles, but options have changed dramatically since extra cup holders and a second cigarette lighter would generate a thrill. The upscale features and luxury touches in the 2005 models will not disappoint visitors to **The Washington Auto Show®** (Dec. 26, 2004 – Jan. 2, 2005, Washington Convention Center) who hope to preview the finest on four wheels.

Even in these challenging economic times, the luxury market is finding strong success. Sales of new luxury-brand vehicles jumped 7% from January through September to \$1.39 billion, reports J.D. Power & Associates. Nine models in the 15-brand luxury group had sales increases for the period. Industry analysts attribute the growth in the luxury category to rising income in some brackets, along with a desire for trendy SUVs and crossover vehicles. Dealers point to deep leasing incentives for new luxury models as another factor for the volume increase.

Auto show attendees will see the latest models in the luxury class on the showroom floor from manufacturers including category sales leaders Lexus, BMW and Cadillac, as well as 2005 models from Mercedes-Benz, Lincoln, Hummer, Jaguar, Volvo and Porsche. Consumers prowling the exhibit floor will find that manufacturers in almost all vehicle categories have included a touch of luxury for buyers, including:

From Toyota: The all-new Toyota Avalon full-size sedan will share upscale features with the Lexus LS 430 luxury flagship model, including heated and cooled front seats, reclining rear seats, and *Adaptive Cruise Control*, which maintains a pre-set distance from the vehicle ahead, even if that vehicle slows down.

From General Motors: The Cadillac STS offers a best-in-class Bose sound system with 5.1 channel sound DVD and 15 speakers that provide concert quality sound. *Adaptive Cruise Control* is another feature on the Cadillac STS that allows the driver to effortlessly and safely maintain their desired speed and following distance. The Pontiac G6 and Buick Lacrosse offer *Remote Start*, but the STS goes one step further with *Smart Remote Start*, whereby the vehicle not only starts up from a distance of 200 feet but also automatically adjusts a variety of personalization settings in the process.

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From Ford: The *MyColor* option on the Mustang enables drivers to change the color of dashboard lights. Ford vehicles also feature heated and cooled seats, voice recognition options, and adaptive cruise control. Ford's *Advance Telematics* can include wireless electronic gaming (Sony PlayStation 2) and DVD, along with individual displays in the seatbacks to keep the family entertained on long rides. The *SmartSwitch*, mounted on the steering wheel, controls the fan speed and temperature setting for climate control, as well as the volume, seek, and selection control for entertainment, keeping a driver's hands on the wheel and out of harm's way.

From Daimler-Chrysler: The *UConnect* hands-free communication system uses Bluetooth technology to provide wireless communication between the customer's compatible cellular telephone and the vehicle's on-board audio receiver. The *Stow 'n Go™ Seating and Storage System* on 2005 Chrysler and Dodge minivans provides the ability to fold second and third row seats into the floor, going from seven seats to two in just 30 seconds. The Jeep Grand Cherokee is the first Chrysler Group vehicle to offer *Smart Beam Headlamps*, which uses an infrared sensor mounted on the windshield to adjust headlight intensity. Under normal "manual" high beam operation, both the low and high beams are on at full intensity in the headlamp module. In comparison, when the Smart Beam feature is working, the low beams remain on at full intensity, while the intensity of the high beams varies from 25 to 100 percent to provide the maximum amount of light for nighttime driving conditions.

From Mercedes-Benz: Mercedes' *Hands-Free Communication System* features one-touch steering wheel controls, phone book access, and optional hands free voice recognition control. The *Distronic Adaptive Cruise Control System* helps keep the car at a pre-set speed and distance from the car in front.

The 2005 Washington Auto Show: "Driven by Design" will bring more than 700 new cars, trucks, mini-vans and sport utility vehicles from over 37 domestic and import automakers to the Washington Convention Center from Dec. 26, 2004 through Jan. 2, 2005. For auto show operating hours, ticket information and discounted "e-tickets," visit the Washington Auto Show online at www.washingtonautoshow.com or contact WANADA at 1-866-WASH-AUTO or 202.237.7200.

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