

Ford Abandons Ranger Pickup In North America

DEARBORN, Mich. (AP) — Ford Motor Co. has confirmed that it will not sell the next generation of the small Ford Ranger pickup truck in North America.

The market for small pickups has shrunk in recent years, and Ford believes it can cover the whole North American market with multiple versions of its F-150 full-size pickup truck, said Mark Schirmer, a spokesman for the Dearborn, Mich., automaker, said Monday.

Ford, which has been trying to simplify its global lineup, decided to eliminate the U.S.-made Ranger after the 2011 model year, Schirmer said.

Ford announced Monday that the new Ranger, which will be sold in all markets outside North America, will be unveiled Oct. 15 at an auto show in Sydney, Australia.

The new truck, Schirmer said, is larger than the current North American and international Rangers and is closer to the size of the F-150, he said. The F-150, when equipped with a V-6 engine, gets close to the same fuel economy as the new Ranger, he added.

In the mid-1990s, small pickup trucks made up about 8 percent of the U.S. automotive market, but their share is now 2 percent, Schirmer said.

Also, Ranger buyers weren't necessarily looking for a truck, he said.

"We found that a lot of Ranger buyers were not really buying pickup truck capability," he said. "They were looking for small, affordable transportation."

Ford now has the Fiesta subcompact to sell people looking for affordable transportation, he said.

Rangers became available in the U.S. in 1982, and sales here peaked in 1999 at just over 348,000, according to Ward's AutoInfoBank. But only 55,600 sold last year. So far this year, 35,029 have sold.

Ford originally planned to close the St. Paul, Minn., plant where U.S. Rangers are made in 2008, but the company delayed the closure until fall 2011. The factory employs 750 workers.

Ford shares closed Monday at up 8 cents, or 0.6 percent, at \$12.57.

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