

Trucks, SUVs Power Strong Auto Sales

DETROIT (AP) — Car buyers were out in force in October, snapping up trucks and SUVs and taking advantage of deals on Japanese cars.

U.S. car and truck sales were expected to top 1 million in October, a surprising number for a month when sales are usually slow. When adjusted for seasonal factors, that would be the best pace since the Cash for Clunkers program in August 2009.

Pent-up demand drove October sales. Japanese inventories are finally reaching normal levels after the March earthquake and tsunami in Japan. Many buyers who spent the summer waiting for Japanese cars could finally buy them in October.

Deals on those cars also inspired some buyers. Auto information site TrueCar.com said Honda Motor Co. raised its incentives by 18 percent to an average of \$2,380 per vehicle, while Nissan Motor Co.'s incentives were up 15 percent to \$2,917. But Detroit automakers didn't follow suit, with deals that were only slightly higher than last October.

Trucks and SUVs were the big winners for Detroit automakers. Ford Motor Co. said sales of its Explorer SUV more than tripled from a year ago, while F-Series truck sales were up 7 percent. Ford's overall sales were up 6 percent from a year ago, even though its car sales fell 8 percent.

Ram pickup truck sales jumped 21 percent at Chrysler Group LLC. Chrysler also benefitted from strong sales of the Jeep Compass and Grand Cherokee SUVs. Chrysler sales were up 27 percent from last October.

General Motors Co.'s sales were up 2 percent, with sales of the Chevrolet Silverado pickup rising 11 percent. Sales of the Chevrolet Cruze compact car were more than double last year, when the car was first introduced.

Other automakers reporting results Tuesday:

— Nissan Motor Co. said sales were up 18 percent, thanks to big increases for the Altima sedan and Rogue crossover.

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