

Grand Cherokee Sales Keep Factory Humming

Tom Krisher, AP Auto Writer

DETROIT (AP) — Sales of Jeep Grand Cherokee and Dodge Durango SUVs are so strong that their factory will stay open through the normal two-week summer shutdown.

Automakers typically close plants around the July 4 holiday to update cars and trucks for the new model year and maintain the machinery.

But the Jefferson North factory in Detroit that makes the SUVs will stay open all summer, Chrysler spokeswoman Jodi Tinson said Monday. Plant employees already are working overtime and the factory is staying open for two shifts on two out of every three Saturdays. Normally a plant is closed on weekends.

Chrysler sold nearly 38,000 Grand Cherokees from January through March, up 44 percent from a year earlier. Durango sales jumped 33 percent to just over 11,000.

The Grand Cherokee, which was redesigned for the 2011 model year, is Chrysler's second-best selling vehicle after the Dodge Ram pickup. The Durango, also redesigned as a 2011 model, ranks 12th in company sales.

Tinson said Chrysler can make changes for the next model year while the plant is running.

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