

Corvette Production Idled For 6 Months In KY

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Bruce Schreiner, Associated Press

LOUISVILLE, Ky. (AP) — General Motors plans to idle Corvette production in Kentucky for six months to prepare for the next generation of the iconic sports car.

The automaker laid out its schedule Thursday for revamping its assembly plant in Bowling Green for the all-new 2014 model.

Production will halt sometime in February to make way for retooling, renovating the body shop and retraining employees, GM spokesman Monte Doran said in a telephone interview. Production on the next model will begin in the third quarter of 2013, he said.

GM has retooled plants before while continuing production, but that wasn't feasible at the Corvette plant, he said.

That's because of the scope of the vehicle's redesign. The 2014 Corvette will have just two carry-over parts from the current model, Doran said: the interior cabin air filter and the rear latch for the removable roof panel.

"With this car, because it's such a dramatic change, we felt like the best thing to do was to halt production so we could completely overhaul the interior of (the) Bowling Green (plant) to get ready for the new car," he said.

About 700 people work at the south-central Kentucky plant, the only GM site that builds Corvettes.

Plant manager Dave Tatman said some temporary layoffs will occur during the production down time but won't last long.

"If there are periods of time that our people will be off, it will be a matter of days, not a matter of months," he said Thursday.

GM last year announced a \$131 million investment in the plant, along with plans to add about 250 jobs.

About 150 of those jobs have been added this year and the work force will continue to grow next year, Tatman said.

GM dealers were informed of the upcoming six-month lag in Corvette production, Doran said.

The production stoppage will result in some shortages next year, he said.

"There will be a period of time when Corvettes will be hard to find until the 2014

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(model) comes out," Doran said.

Meanwhile, at a Thursday event in Georgia, the automaker unveiled a new Crossed Flags logo to debut with the 2014 Corvette. More than 100 variations were considered before the final design was selected, the company said.

"The flags are much more modern, more technical and more detailed than before — underscoring the comprehensive redesign of the entire car," said Ed Welburn, GM vice president of global design.

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