

2013 Nissan Leaf Now Being Built In TN

The Associated Press

NASHVILLE, Tenn. (AP) — The 2013 Nissan Leaf is now being produced in Tennessee.

Nissan announced in a news release Wednesday that production of the all-electric car had begun in Smyrna. The car is being built next door to the Nissan plant that produces the Leaf's lithium-ion battery.

The new Leaf features faster charging and what will likely be an extended driving range, although that will be determined by Environmental Protection Agency testing.

In addition, 2013 will see a new, lower-priced entry-level Leaf S model.

Meanwhile, the SV model adds enhancements such as a 7-inch color LCD screen and six-speaker audio system. The SL model will see leather-appointed seating and 17-inch aluminum-alloy wheels.

Nissan Division Vice President and General Manager Al Castignetti said in the news release that the "refinements and enhancements for 2013 hit at the core of customer requests during Leaf's first two years ... whether they desire fewer standard features for an even more affordable car or more luxury amenities."

SV and SL grades will fully charge in about four hours at 220 volts thanks to a new 6.6-kilowatt onboard charger. That's about half the time it takes to fully charge the current models. The system is optionally available on the Leaf S, which in standard form uses a 3.6-kilowatt onboard charger.

"Being able to 80-percent recharge the Leaf battery in approximately four hours gives owners tremendous flexibility, such as recharging while going to dinner and a movie, attending a sporting event or spending a half-day at the office," Castignetti said.

The 2013 Leaf also increases rear cargo space to 24 cubic feet with the rear seats upright and 30 cubic feet with the rear seats folded down.

For navigation, the new Leaf features an "Eco route" system that includes suggested alternative routes that save battery power.

According to the company, other 2013 additions include an available hybrid heater system that provides better cold weather performance while consuming less energy and a new available "B" drive mode. The "B" mode charges the battery more efficiently while braking or decelerating than the current "Eco" mode option.

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The 2013 Leaf will be available at dealers in February.

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