

# Chrysler Exec Says Next New Car To Be On Time

Tom Krisher, AP Auto Writer

TRAVERSE CITY, Michigan (AP) — Chrysler's manufacturing chief said Monday that a new midsize car should hit dealerships on time next year, following costly delays with recent product launches.

Vice President Mauro Pino said the new model, a sorely needed replacement for the aging Chrysler 200, should reach showrooms as scheduled in the first quarter. The new car is scheduled to reach dealerships sometime in the first quarter of 2014.

Pino said Chrysler has learned from problems with other product launches. The company recently held up distribution of the new Jeep Cherokee midsize SUV to reprogram the nine-speed automatic transmission to make it smoother. Pino said the software changes are similar to updating a home computer. The Cherokee should reach dealers sometime in September.

"Every time we find an opportunity to do something better, we want to do it," Pino said in an interview at an auto industry conference outside of Traverse City, Michigan.

Earlier this year, Chrysler CEO Sergio Marchionne, who also runs Chrysler's parent Fiat SpA, said that delays in new versions of the Ram pickup and Jeep Grand Cherokee contributed to a 65 percent profit drop in the first quarter.

Pino said Chrysler's huge growth also has parts makers scrambling to ramp up production to match demand. Some of the delays, such as with the Grand Cherokee, happened because the company ran short of parts.

"Sometimes we go too fast for the supply base," he said. "We need to slow down a little bit."

He still expects Chrysler to grow, but not as quickly as it has since it's emerged from bankruptcy protection in 2009. Its U.S. sales have grown from a 2009 low of 931,000 to 1.6 million last year. International sales also are growing, with help from Fiat.

Pino, a veteran Fiat manufacturing executive, said Chrysler has adopted Fiat's "World Class Manufacturing" system that trains workers uniformly so they all do jobs correctly and in the same way.

Chrysler has said that because of the delays, a slowdown in Europe and other problems, it doesn't expect to meet the targets it set at the beginning of this year. The Auburn Hills, Michigan-based company now expects to ship 2.6 million vehicles worldwide in 2013, at the low end of its goal of between 2.6 million and 2.7 million. It expects to earn between \$1.7 billion and \$2.2 billion, down from its previous

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target of around \$2.2 billion.

Chrysler said its net income rose 16 percent to \$507 million in the April-June period from \$436 million a year ago. It was Chrysler's eighth straight quarterly profit.

Pino conceded that Marchionne has been unhappy with the previous manufacturing delays.

"It's correct the boss is upset every time there is a delay," Pino said. "He has to be upset because every delay, every plant, is going against your financial plan."

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