

Contact:

Dodge Bolsters U.S. Commercial Vehicle Strategy With Launch of New Sprinter Van

- Key product in aggressive plans for full line of Dodge commercial vans and trucks
- Response to customer demand for more sales and service locations
- Significantly enhances fleet opportunities for Business Link dealers
- Major single brand volume advantages and benefits through a full line of van, passenger car, SUV, and truck offerings
- Designed with business owners in mind, ideal transportation choice for any industry

January 4, 2003, Auburn Hills, Mich. -

Dodge today officially broadened its U.S. commercial van strategy with the introduction of the new Sprinter van at the 2003 North American International Auto Show in Detroit. Powered by Mercedes-Benz, and now available through select Dodge dealers across America, Sprinter is the newest vehicle to be added to the Dodge commercial lineup. With this addition, a host of expanded benefits have become available to commercial van customers including a strong increase in sales and service locations, seamless integration into the full line of Dodge commercial vehicles, and financing through DaimlerChrysler Services.

As the market leader in its class in Europe, the Sprinter consistently is one of the most successful products of the entire DaimlerChrysler Commercial Vehicles Division. Geared to the comfort, safety, and convenience of drivers continually on the go, Sprinter easily stands out among the competition as a unique, premium product. With its large load capacity, a powerful and economical engine, and coupled with a host of attractive product benefits such as its impressive fuel mileage, all this translates into a competitive advantage for its core customer base of fleet owners, retailers, delivery companies and other vocational service companies.

"The Dodge Sprinter is both a logical and natural next step in realizing an ambitious multi-part commercial vehicle strategy within Dodge to add incremental sales across all of our brands in the next few years," said Darryl R. Jackson, Vice President of Dodge Marketing.

In Sprinter, fuel efficiency meets smart, comfortable interior design ... the right combination for business today. "Utility business owners, their concerns too long ignored by commercial vehicle manufacturers, now have a transport option tailored to their specific business needs in the Dodge Sprinter," added Patrick W. Dougherty, Director of Dodge Commercial Vans - the new division charged with setting up the U.S. dealer network and developing all sales, marketing and after-market support for the Sprinter. He added, "In continuing the tremendous work already begun by our predecessor company, DaimlerChrysler Vans, we look forward to successfully meeting our launch goals, while maintaining a steady and focused strategy in development, outreach to new audiences, and expanding brand awareness."

Available on the global market since 1995, the Sprinter is a proven winner and has benefited from a number of design, quality and technological enhancements since it first premiered including a new engine, exterior, and safety features. More than the simple combination of good ideas and construction techniques, its resounding success in Europe is the direct result of careful, consistent implementation of an integrated concept. Current vans on the market were originally designed for private use and adapted for commercial use. Introduced to the United States in 2001, the Sprinter has been designed specifically for commercial use and it is continuing to establish itself as a major player in the North American commercial van market.

The Sprinter's history alone puts it in a class by itself. Mercedes-Benz, inventor of the commercial vehicle, developed the Sprinter as a high-end product for the transportation needs of today and tomorrow. Voted European "Van of the Year" in 1998 and "Commercial Vehicle of the Year" (Vans Category) for the past six years, Sprinter remains the market leader in its segment throughout Western Europe. And now, the Sprinter is available to address the specific needs of the United States commercial van market.

"In introducing the Dodge Sprinter, DaimlerChrysler has taken immediate steps to move forward an expanded global van strategy, while segueing naturally into the next phase of our U.S. Sprinter product launch," said Dr. Rolf Bartke, Senior Vice President of DaimlerChrysler AG and Head of the Mercedes-Benz Vans Business Unit. "Inching ever-closer to a million units in service, the Sprinter remains an enormous success around the world. And now, as a Dodge, this move will ensure that the Sprinter continues on its natural path to success here in the United States while supporting a host of new consumer segments through Dodge's historic and strong position in the light duty vehicle market."

Both cargo and passenger vans are manufactured in DaimlerChrysler's state-of-the-art Sprinter plant in Dusseldorf, Germany. Cargo vans are delivered in a semi-assembled state to a DaimlerChrysler plant in Gaffney, South Carolina and the passenger vans are delivered fully assembled.

Unmatched Versatility for Virtually Any Business Need

Every business owner's needs are different. That's why Sprinter was engineered to make customization easier than with other commercial vans. Uniquely allowing customers to select the configuration that suits their specific industry needs, Sprinter's design is ideal for virtually all applications - from transport of passengers to the day-to-day rigors of hauling cargo and packages. Literally, it affords them custom choices unavailable elsewhere in the market.

Because of its unique versatility, the Sprinter is able to adapt to custom business demands through a wide range of available vocational upfit packages. Intended to be a total business solution, upfit options include a number of utility business packages with custom storage solutions perfect for transporting the tools and equipment used in the utility industries.

The Sprinter is available in three different wheelbases - short (118 inches), intermediate (140 inches), and long (158) - some of which can be delivered with two different roof heights. Despite its compact dimensions, the Sprinter impressively offers between 247 and 473 square feet of storage space depending on the wheelbase and roof height. And, the flat floor in the cargo area and the tapered rear wheel housing ensure the van's capacity is put to optimum use.

Key Features - Engine Efficiency

The Sprinter is powered by a high-performance Mercedes-Benz 2.7 liter diesel engine with 154 hp and 243 pound-feet of torque. The common rail direct injection system (CDI) for the easy to maintain diesel engine ensures an even power distribution while also reducing emissions and external noise. This state-of-the-art engine guarantees very low fuel consumption without sacrifice to the operating performance in dealing with the toughest daily applications. Moreover, Sprinter's engine efficiency far outpaces any competitive van or minibus, with customers reporting 22-mpg (average) and a vehicle range of approximately 550 miles. Notwithstanding, the automatic five-speed transmission system from Mercedes-Benz provides optimum power transmission, increases driver comfort and maintains optimum fuel consumption. Because of these features, Sprinter provides excellent value for managers looking to improve their businesses' bottom lines by reducing expenditures for fuel and vehicle maintenance.

Key Features - Maintenance

A real workhorse, the Sprinter is designed to spend less time in the shop and more time on the road - without sacrificing performance. Sprinter customers who choose the conventional maintenance concept benefit from the vehicle's long standard maintenance intervals. An oil change is required only every 10,000 miles, and maintenance service is required only every 20,000 miles. Unprecedented among commercial vans, these long service intervals are made possible by the vehicle's state-of-the-art engine design with its large number of maintenance-free or low-maintenance components.

Key features - Comfort

The Sprinter was designed to not only maximize the performance of the vehicle, but the performance of the driver as well. This is why the van's driver area has been designed fully in accordance with the principles of modern ergonomics. The cab provides excellent all-around vision for drivers and passengers. Standard power steering ensures ease of handling, and a tight turning radius makes the vehicle easy to maneuver in tight areas, such as busy city streets or small delivery areas. Sprinter's spacious interior provides ample legroom and freedom of movement, and ergonomically designed seats maximize comfort. These features make the vehicle drive and feel more like a passenger car than a commercial vehicle.

Key Features - Safety

Safety is a core component of every DaimlerChrysler design, and the Sprinter is the embodiment of this philosophy. The vehicle not only transports people and cargo, but does it safely. Four-wheel disc brakes are standard, and optional add-ons include the Anti-lock Braking System (ABS) with integrated Acceleration Skid Control (ASR). These options help to ensure steerability under hard braking and provide improved traction and stability in slippery conditions. Full size driver and passenger airbags are standard, helping lessen the chance of serious injury in front-impact collisions. Another innovative safety feature is extra length and increased rigidity in the cab section, which improves performance in crash situations.

Dougherty added, "The Sprinter is more than the simple combination of good ideas and construction techniques. Its resounding success in Europe is the direct result of careful, consistent implementation of an integrated concept. Emphasizing quality, all aspects of the Sprinter are held to the highest premium standards. Its pioneering body layout, innovative engine, transmission and drive technology, comprehensive and customized maintenance package, and the long-term quality of each and every component easily make Sprinter the best commercial van on the global market."

Adapted for the most varied areas of application in urban transport situations, the Dodge Sprinter is equally ideal for transporting passengers comfortably and safely as a shuttle or hotel bus as it is for transporting cargo dependably for courier, express, package and other delivery services. In short, it is the ideal van for long-term success. Depending on model and options, the suggested retail price starts at \$26,765 for the cargo van and \$28,260 for the passenger van.

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