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Arkansas Democrat Gazette

NORTHWEST ARKANSAS EDITION

New-car registrations down 28% in June

BY DAVID SMITH
 Posted on Saturday, August 1, 2009
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Auto dealers' sales in Arkansas

JANUARY-JUNE | *Title registrations by the Arkansas Motor Vehicle Commission in the first six months of the years.*

Top 5 new-car dealers

2009		2008	
1	Landers Toyota Scion, Little Rock	1	Landers Toyota Scion, Little Rock 1,011
2	Russell Chevrolet Co., North Little Rock*	2	Landers Chrysler Dodge Jeep, Benton 913
3	North Point Toyota Scion, NLR	3	Russell Chevrolet Co., North Little Rock* 904
4	Everett Buick Pontiac GMC, Bryant	4	Bale Chevrolet, Little Rock 783
5	Bale Chevrolet, Little Rock 522	5	North Point Toyota Scion, NLR 745

Top 5 used-car dealers

2009		2008	
1	Landers Toyota Scion, Little Rock	1	Everett Buick Pontiac GMC, Bryant 533
2	Landers Chrysler Dodge Jeep, Benton	2	Landers Chrysler Dodge Jeep, Benton 494
3	John Gibson Auto Sales, Hot Springs	3	Gwatney Chevrolet, Jacksonville 458
4	Gwatney Chevrolet, Jacksonville	4	Teeter Chevrolet, Malvern 392
5	Teeter Chevrolet, Malvern 368	5	North Point Toyota Scion, NLR 389

Top 5 makes

JUNE			
1	Chevrolet	4	Honda 409
2	Ford 824	5	Nissan 354
3	Toyota 732		

* Russell Chevrolet Co. sales include Chevrolets and Hondas
 SOURCE: Cross-Sell of Lexington, Ky. Arkansas Democrat-Gazette

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New-vehicle registrations declined

28 percent in June compared with June last year, a researcher of auto title registrations said Friday.

For the first six months of the year, new-car registrations are down 33 percent, said Cross-Sell of Lexington, Ky. Cross-Sell is a 20-year-old firm that provides market analysis reports on auto registrations in 27 states.

"One of the stories of this recession has been that folks have decreased their purchases of durable goods like cars and houses," said Kathy Deck, director of the Center for Business and Economic Research at the University of Arkansas at Fayetteville.

In the fourth quarter last year and the first quarter this year, automobile inventories stacked up significantly, Deck said.

"Folks were really scared to purchase then," Deck said. "Since that time, you've seen all the car companies engage in a serious effort of inventory management. They aren't producing as many cars."

The cash-for-clunkers program probably hurt car sales in June, because people anticipated they could get more for their trade-ins when that incentive began, Deck said.

June's decline in new-car registrations was less than the 34 percent year-over-year drop in recorded in May.

In June, there were 5,193 new vehicles titled, compared with 7,237 in June last year. There were 9,382 used vehicles registered by automobile dealers in June, compared with 10,697 in June 2008. Additionally, there were 18,981 used vehicles registered in private party deals, up from 17,348 private registrations in June 2008.

For the first six months of the year, there were 29,862 new vehicles registered compared with 44,595 in the first half of 2008. There were 187,766 used vehicles registered by auto dealers in Arkansas in the first six months this year, compared with 201,366 in the first half of last year.

Chevrolet was the No. 1 make of new vehicles sold in Arkansas in June. The top five models in June were Chevrolet full-size pickups, Ford pickups, GMC full-size pickups, Toyota Camry and the Dodge Ram pickup.

"We are still a pickup and [sports utility vehicle] state," said Tim Hall, sales manager for Bale Chevrolet in Little Rock. "People buy trucks here because they need trucks."

Bale Chevrolet was fifth in the number of new vehicle registrations for the first six months of the year, with sales down about 30 percent from the same period last year.

"Our truck sales are down about 27 percent this year," Hall said. "But our car sales, with lower fuel prices, are still holding pretty steady compared to last year, when we had [almost] \$4 a gallon gas."

Many Bale customers are buying newer used cars than in the past, Hall said.

Cross-Sell's statistics do not match the number of auto sales for June. They are based on titles registered by the Arkansas Motor Vehicle Commission in June. The registrations do not strictly correlate to vehicle sales for the month, a Cross-Sell spokesman said. For that reason, the number of titles registered for a particular dealer in a month are often different than the number of sales a dealer recorded in the month.

During June, bankrupt Chrysler terminated the franchises of 789 dealers nationwide, including eight of the 36 dealers in Arkansas, to save costs in bankruptcy. General Motors said it will eliminate more than 1,300 of its dealers nationwide late next year, including 17 of the 89 in Arkansas, according to GM's bankruptcy filing.

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