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New-vehicle registrations in state down in January

By [David Smith](#)

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LITTLE ROCK — New-vehicle registrations in Arkansas in January were down 12 percent from a year earlier, according to a research firm.

There were 5,818 new vehicles registered in the state in January, down from 6,642 in January last year, according to Cross-Sell of Lexington, Ky., which provides market analysis on auto registrations in 27 states. Cross-Sell receives the Arkansas information from the state Office of Motor Vehicles.

It was the 16th straight month that new-auto registrations were down when compared with the same month the previous year. The last time new vehicle titles exceeded those of the same month the previous year was September 2008, when 7,741 titles were issued. In September 2007, 7,413 had been issued.

Registrations do not correlate to vehicle sales for a month. The reason is that in Arkansas, buyers have up to 30 days before they are required to register their vehicles. For that reason, the number of titles registered in a month are often different than the number of sales recorded in the month, the spokesman said.

Actual sales of new and used vehicles in Arkansas are not available.

Dennis Jungmeyer, president of the Arkansas Automobile Dealers Association, said he was surprised that new car registrations were not down more than they were.

“Dealers throughout the state reported that January was very slow,” Jungmeyer said. “It’s just indicative of the economy’s woes. A lot of people still have insecurities about employment.”

The state unemployment rate in December was 7.7 percent, the highest in 22 years. January figures are due out March 10.

Kathy Deck, director of the Center for Business and Economic Research at the University of Arkansas in Fayetteville, said consumers are still reluctant to buy large ticket items.

“They’re being particularly reticent to make long term big purchases like automobiles,” Deck said.

Chevrolet easily outdistanced every other auto manufacturer in vehicle registrations, grabbing almost 21 percent of the new-car market in the state in January. There were 1,202 Chevys registered in January, followed by 864 Fords.

Arkansans by far prefer pickups over any other model. The top four models registered in January were all pickups, led by Chevy with 493 titles and Ford F-series pickups with 415.

Full-size pickup registrations accounted for 26 percent of the vehicles registered in January, followed by midsized cars at 15 percent and compact sport utilities at 12 percent.

There were 9,011 used vehicles titled by auto dealers in January, down 16 percent from 10,710 registered in January last year. There were 17,821 private-party transactions in January, down 11 percent from 19,965 in January last year.

Auto sales aren't likely to pick up until later this year, Jungmeyer said.

"Economists in the industry feel the second quarter will remain somewhat sluggish," Jungmeyer said. "But the third and fourth quarters should see some gradual increases in sales. Their longrange forecast is that in 2011 and 2012 we should return to the 2007-2008 sales levels."

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