Summer 2020 Will Look Different This Year in the Automotive Industry

We all know summer 2020 will look different this year. In some places, major festivals have been cancelled, and it is uncertain whether pools will open. In other areas, tourist destinations are just beginning to reopen, and hotels are cautiously welcoming guests. An uneasy workforce is wondering whether they can squeeze in their traditional summer vacation, or shift plans to vacations closer to home.

For those of us who eagerly await automotive developments each summer, this summer will also look a little different. Summer often includes previews of upcoming cars in summer blockbuster films and flashy new model year announcements to generate buzz. Detroit and New York auto shows were both canceled, and many movie theaters remain closed. Dealerships also usually push for closing of deals to move older model years off the lots and make room for newer models in early fall, but as we previously reported, the supply and demand for those vehicles has dwindled. And summer also usually means traditional summer shutdowns at many manufacturing facilities, both for maintenance and for retooling for new model years, in order to stay on schedule for the new model years’ fall launch.

COVID-19 is reshaping those plans this year. A number of automakers and suppliers have announced they do not plan on the traditional summer shutdown this year, on the heels of weeks or even months of idled plants due to COVID-19. GM said their plants will continue operating during the end of June and July, their traditional
shutdown, and FCA has said the same. **Ford is anticipated to continue rolling and shorter shutdowns** to try and make up lost manufacturing time for their launch of certain key new models this year—like the much anticipated 2021 F-150.

For automakers who were planning on aggressive redesigns this year, the COVID shutdowns have made them rethink their timelines. The adjusted manufacturing schedule is already pushing back new or redesigned model launches. **LMC Automotive estimates** at least 24 of the anticipated 38 new or designed models have been delayed, with some (like the F-150) being pushed to later in the year, and others to next year. The F-150 manufacturing will likely start in September, instead of July. The Ford Bronco Sport is likely to be pushed to next year. LMC Automotive reported that the Nissan Frontier was likely to be delayed a year, Acura MDX by 5 months, and the Toyota Sienna 3 months, with the delay on other vehicles yet to be announced. In the meantime, automakers will be looking to make up lost ground on 2020 models, selling them deeper into the fall than normal—or beyond.

At least one redesign is still planned to launch this summer—the new Cadillac Escalade, which is slated to launch in August. And although summer looks different this year, some of the familiar signs remain. There may be **fewer fireworks this year**, but as far as we know, ice cream, watermelon, and ices remain in ample supply.

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