

New Forester on the way

The 2019 version of Subaru's popular compact utility vehicle looks much the same as before, other than its more-rugged-looking nose. Behind the sheetmetal, however, an all-new platform extends the distance between the front and rear wheels by about one inch,



2019 Subaru Forester

which adds rear legroom. A lower load floor translates into slightly more stowage volume. All Foresters will henceforth come with Subaru's EyeSight active-safety technologies, while an available assist system, called DriverFocus, warns if the operator appears to be inattentive due to fatigue, or is otherwise distracted. The Forester's standard 2.5-liter four-cylinder engine now makes 182 horsepower (a gain of 12 ponies), although the optional turbocharged 250-horsepower 2.0-liter four-cylinder will no longer be offered.

More cowbell:
Mazda's popular MX-5 sportster will get a little bit sportier with a boost in horsepower.



Mazda boosts the Miata

News is that the world's most successful roadster (one million units sold and counting) will receive a power bump for 2019. Currently, the **Mazda MX-5 Miata's** little 2.0-liter four-cylinder engine lays down 155 horsepower, which is plenty for most drivers, but it's a few ponies shy for performance-oriented pilots. Mazda intends to satisfy those folks with a 181-horsepower version of the 2.0 and reports indicate it will accomplish this without a power adder such as a turbocharger. Though that doesn't sound like a lot, the lightweight Miata has a sporty power-to-weight ratio, and word is that the reworked engine will strip more pounds by using lightweight pistons, connecting rods and crankshaft. The engine will reportedly spin faster than the current 6,800 rpm iteration, and feature enlarged intake and exhaust ports. Also look for a telescoping steering wheel, a welcome addition to the claustrophobic cockpit. What isn't known at this time is whether the more potent powerplant will be standard or optional.



PHOTO BY JOE RAEDLE/GETTY IMAGE

A fire at a parts supplier for Ford's best-selling F-150 has caused a temporary shutdown of production at the two U.S. plants that make the pickup truck.

F-150 shortage?

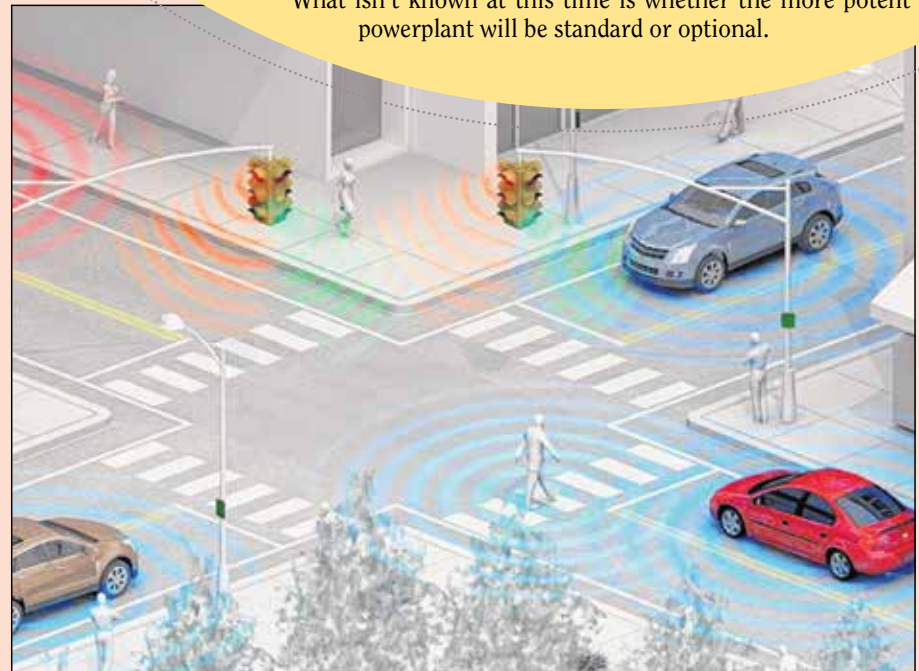
A fire in the factory of a parts supplier for the F-150 has caused Ford to temporarily shutdown production of the popular pickup truck model.

The Dearborn, Michigan, plant that produces the F-150 has been idle since Wednesday, and production has already been suspended at the automaker's facility outside of Kansas City, Missouri. According to reports, the shutdown could last for several weeks as Ford looks for an alternative supplier for the parts. (The fire occurred on May 2 at Meridian Magnesium Products of America's plant in Eaton Rapids, Michigan). The 7,600 workers at the two Ford plants will continue receiving a majority of their regular pay during the temporary shutdown.

Ford says it has an 84-day supply of F-150s in the factory-to-showroom pipeline, enough to prevent any shortages in the near term. But those seeking special versions or options may find availability limited.

The take away? If you were angling to get your hands on an F-150, now's the time, as demand was expected to increase even before the fire. Rising interest rates will make financing a big truck more expensive as time goes on (in 2017, the average F-150 sold for \$35,240). And rising gas prices are putting a premium on the now more frugal F-150, whose mpg's increased since Ford began using lighter weight aluminum in its construction.

The F-150 has been the best selling vehicle in the U.S. for 40 consecutive years, and accounts for a third of Ford's North American sales. The company has already sold some 287,000 F Series trucks this year alone, up 4 percent over last year.



Traffic lights that talk to cars

It's going to be an important foundation to have in place before the wave of autonomous vehicles hits the nation's roadways. That is, the ability of cars to interact with traffic control devices.

Cars equipped with vehicle-to-infrastructure technology, or V2I, can connect with traffic signals in Washington, D.C., as well as Portland, Ore., Houston, Tex., Denver, Colo., plus other cities. Currently, only Audi offers V2I in some of its vehicles (subscription required), but other automakers are planning to follow suit.

V2I only offers a red-light countdown visual for now, but the system will eventually mean that cities can alter red or green-light times and reroute self-driving vehicles to avoid traffic congestion.

TEST DRIVE

2018 Ford F-150 Limited

Continued from page 1 doors), and SuperCrew, which is fitted with four, full-size doors. The three cabs are complemented by three bed lengths: 5½', 6½' and 8 feet. The longer two are offered on regular and SuperCab, while the shorter two are available on the SuperCrew.

Regardless of size, the pickup boxes can be outfitted with a variety of options (covers, dividers, bins, tie-downs, tailgate remote, bed liner, ramps, etc.).

One of my favorite things about the interior in the current generation F-150s is the door dip. While you sit tall in the saddle in a truck like this, the front por-

tion of the door/window (near the mirror) dips down to allow for better visibility. We're used to vehicles making allowances for rear visibility issues by offering workarounds (like blind spot monitoring or bird's-eye cameras). But this is the first time I can remember a vehicle making allowances for the fact that when you're looking out in a big pickup, you're also looking down.

Like most trucks, F-150's approach to controls is straight forward and uncomplicated. Front cabin storage spots include a cavernous, covered, center console, and a number of smaller stowage spots about the cabin. All trim levels pick



IT'S THE LITTLE TOUCHES THAT COUNT. The 2018 Ford F-150 features a "door dip" (visible on the front window just behind the side mirror) that allows drivers a better view of the road from their lofty perch in the pickup.



PHOTOS COURTESY OF THE MANUFACTURER

TEST DRIVE
this vehicle at these preferred dealerships:

DEPAULA FORD
799 Central Ave, Albany, NY 12206
(518) 336-0979 www.depaulaford.com

JACK BYRNE FORD
1003 Hudson River Rd., Mechanicville, NY 12118
(518) 664-9841 jackbyrneford.dealerconnection.com

up some new color/materials choices for 2018. New options for infotainment systems now include a 4G LTE Wi-Fi hotspot for up to 10 devices, and a high end Bang & Olufsen sound system. The Ford's front headroom is more than Ram or Tundra, less than Silverado/Sierra, and only the GM cousin's.

Rear seat room on SuperCrew models is particularly generous. Headroom is a whisker behind Silverado/Sierra; ahead

of the rest of the competitive set. The F-150's 43.6-inches of rear legroom top the segment. And when said seats aren't being used for people, they fold easily to the back of the cab wall. Wide, flat second-row floors like these give you the option of inboard, lockable storage.

A regular contributor to the Times Union for more than 25 years, Dan Lyons is the award-winning author of six books, and photographer of 180 calendars.