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## May Sales Pace Slows, but Mustang Continues to Gallop

By Mike O'Neill

**DEARBORN, June 1, 2005 (FCN)** -- U.S. vehicle sales slowed in May from the pace during the same month last year. But the new Ford Mustang bucked that trend, hitting a 25-year record.

Overall Ford Motor Company sales were down 10.5 percent compared with a year ago. Car sales declined by 5 percent while truck sales dropped 13 percent from 2004.

"May was a pretty weak month," said George Pipas, Ford's U.S. Sales Analysis manager. "The consumer appears to have taken a little pause."

U.S. customers purchased or leased 283,994 cars and trucks from Ford, Mercury, Lincoln, Jaguar, Land Rover and Volvo dealers in May compared to 317,471 during May of 2004. Car sales totaled 101,711 during the month and truck sales totaled 182,283.

Mustang sales were 19,721, up 47 percent compared with a year ago and the highest May sales for Ford's legendary pony car since 1980.

"Mustang received straight A's again," said Steve Lyons, Ford group vice president, North America Marketing, Sales and Service. "The F-Series truck and Ford Five Hundred sedan also had pretty good report cards, but Mustang was the valedictorian in May's graduating class."

General Motors reports may car and truck sales of 393,197 units. That is a 12 percent drop from the same period last year. DaimlerChrysler reports its May sales declined 2.5 percent from 2004 and sales for the Chrysler Group were off by 3 percent, to 214,575 vehicles.

Honda sales in May fell 15 percent from a year earlier, and Toyota dropped 0.5 percent.

Sales of both the Mazda3 and Mazda6 models increased in May, up 36.3 percent and 18.2 percent respectively, but overall Mazda sales declined 3.2 percent from a year ago. "May's slower pace can be attributed to higher gas prices, rising car loan rates and weak consumer confidence," said Burnham Securities analyst David Healy in a research note to investors.

However, Ford economist Emily Kolinski said despite higher interest and fuel costs, the company still anticipates an annual economic growth rate of 3 to 3.5 percent in the U.S. this year, with total industry sales again surpassing 17 million vehicles.

At Ford division, car sales for the month declined 1.5 percent and truck sales were off by 14.1 percent for an overall drop of 10.5 percent from a year ago. Thanks to the Mariner, Mercury truck sales rose 15.7 percent from a year ago. Overall Mercury sales, though, were off by 4.1 percent. At Lincoln, total sales declined 17.1 percent from a year ago. Land Rover sales for the month were up 20 percent to 2,873 thanks to a strong showing by the new LR3.


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Volvo sales in the U.S. were down 8.6 percent to 10,798. Jaguar sales declined 39.3 percent to 2,697.

Based on sales expectations, Ford Motor Company plans to build 730,000 vehicles (210,000 cars and 520,000 trucks) in its North American assembly plants in the third quarter 2005. In the third quarter 2004, the company produced 747,000 vehicles (194,000 cars and 553,000 trucks).

In the second quarter of 2005, the company plans to build 905,000 vehicles (290,000 cars and 615,000 trucks), unchanged from the previously-announced plan.

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