



1541 Reynolds Rd. Charlotte, MI 48813

P: 517.543.6400

SPARTANMOTORS.COM

Spartan Motors Unveils New Chassis, Advanced RV Technology at RVIA

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Intelligent Suspension System and Other Features Designed to Improve Ride, Performance

CHARLOTTE, Mich., Nov. 26 /PRNewswire/ -- More horsepower and more torque -- for less money.

That's the new chassis formula from Spartan Motors, Inc. (NASDAQ:SPAR) that will allow original equipment manufacturers (OEMs) to build a diesel- pusher motorhome with a price tag under \$100,000 and make their peers "envious." The Charlotte, Mich.-based manufacturer of custom chassis and emergency vehicles will unveil its new NVS chassis, as well as other new motorhome technology, including an adaptive suspension system, at the Recreational Vehicle Industry Association (RVIA) national show this week in Louisville, Ky. (Booth 5219)

"From our new chassis to engineering innovations that will improve the motorhome driving experience, we are focused on identifying the hidden needs of our customers and then developing products and features that address these needs," said John Szykiel, president and chief operating officer of Spartan Motors. "While overall RV sales have been soft, consumers are still buying -- and they are drawn to new and innovative products that set them apart from their neighbors.

"We have the most diverse and comprehensive set of product introductions in the history of Spartan Motors for the 2001 RVIA show. We are confident that motorhome manufacturers, retailers and owners will be impressed with our broad array of innovative technology. While others are cutting back on research, development and marketing, we are accelerating.

"Although the market remains challenging, we continue to see positive trends. With more people avoiding air travel, RVs and other methods of ground transportation are gaining in popularity -- in fact, RV rentals have risen more than 40 percent in the past two months."

Chassis

The NVS chassis features a Cummins 300 h.p. big-block engine and 860 foot/lbs. of torque -- enough to allow motorhome makers to build a high- performance diesel-pusher coach for the entry-level segment of the market. The NVS also features an Allison MH3000 six-speed transmission, standard full- air ride, and air brakes, which are all packaged in a 228-inch wheel base for 34-37 foot floor plans.

"This type of power has never been engineered or produced at this price point before," Szykiel said. "RVers looking to step into a diesel product will be able to do so for under \$100,000 -- without sacrificing performance. And given the increased interest in RV rentals, we feel this will also be an attractive price point for manufacturers interested in expanding the presence of diesel products in the rental market.

"The NVS concept is very similar to the successful EC-2000, the industry's first low-cost diesel pusher that we introduced in 1991. The NVS offers enhanced performance, making it the first low-cost, big-block, big performance diesel pusher chassis to hit the market."

Technology

Spartan Motors will also introduce a number of new chassis features designed to improve the ride, handling and maintenance of the motorhome. These include:

* Intelligent suspension system, which is perfect for changing road conditions. The use of hydraulics, air and electronic sensors allows the suspension system to continually adjust to the configuration of the road. Unlike traditional suspension systems, which are reactive in nature, the intelligent system "thinks" and calculates how to give the driver the best ride.

* Multiplexed chassis, which is a self-diagnosing system that features fewer -- and smaller -- wire harness bundles. Multiplexed chassis simplifies the upfitting process and improves reliability, flexibility and serviceability.

* Tire monitor system, which allows the driver to monitor tire pressure and other potential problems from a gauge on the dashboard.

* Smart wheel capabilities, which provide an enhancement to Spartan's current system by adding the ability to dim the back lighting on the wheel. Smart wheel also features built-in, failsafe systems, such as an automatic sensor that turns on high-beam lights at 80 percent intensity when low beams are burned out.

* Adjustable brake and accelerator pedal, which is adjustable to each driver's height and preference. The new system will increase the driver's comfort and the safety.

"In developing these products, our engineers spend a substantial amount of time on the factory floor with our customers and in the field with the end users of our products," Szykiel said. "These new features provide a host of benefits that will allow OEMs to distinguish their products from the competition by offering new must-have technology.

"The end result will be improved ride, handling and safety performance. Our intelligent suspension system, which complements our independent front suspension, could have as dramatic an impact on the RV business as IFS did six years ago."

Over the past two years, Spartan has been working diligently with dealers to help train salespeople. The Company unveiled two new educational products aimed at the retail segment:

* New Dealer training program, which features hands-on technical training on the features and benefits of Spartan chassis. The program, which will be made available to all North American retailers who sell motorhomes with a Spartan chassis, also offers point-of-purchase displays and signage for the showroom.

* The new PDA Silent Salesman, a hand-held computer that provides a complete slate of features and benefits for every Spartan Motors product series, along with photos and video. The Silent Salesman is ideal for use when walking customers through the lot, or taking them on a demo ride.

"The chassis serves as a key purchasing differentiator for many motorhome owners, yet it is often an area where salespeople are the most inexperienced," Szykiel said. "We recognize that if we want retailers to sell product based on chassis features, we need to do a better job of educating them. Our new training program, along with the Silent Salesman, will provide important sales information to the dealerships."

Spartan Motors, Inc. (<https://theshyftgroup.com/>) is a leading developer and manufacturer of custom chassis for recreational vehicles, fire trucks, ambulances and other specialty vehicles. The Company also owns fire and rescue vehicle manufacturers Luverne Fire Apparatus, Quality Manufacturing and Road Rescue, Inc.

Source: Spartan Motors, Inc.

Contact: John Gaedert of Spartan Motors, Inc., +1-517-543-6400; or Mary Ann Sabo or Jeff Lambert of Lambert, Edwards & Associates, Inc., +1-616-233-0500, mail@lambert-edwards.com, for Spartan Motors, Inc.

Website: <https://theshyftgroup.com/>