

Headlines...

Consumer confidence highest in three years

EPA abandons proposed change on used oil regs

Save the date! May 16 - 2011 WANADA OPEN

Obesity and aging population is newest auto safety challenge

Hyundai celebrates 25th anniversary in the U.S.

Financial protection for seniors – A public forum in Mont. Co., Mar. 23

WANADA Board approves new Kindred-Line members

Staying ahead ...

Consumer confidence highest in three years

Confidence among U.S. consumers increased in February to the highest level in three years according to the latest survey by the Thomson Reuters/University of Michigan survey company.

The survey showed that for the first time in six years households were more optimistic than pessimistic and that they intended to spend money in the months ahead.

“There is clearly a bounce in the confidence numbers that coincides with the gains in financial markets and the pickup in the economy, particularly the improving labor market,” Reuters said.

The Reuters/University of Michigan report mirrors other consumer gauges, like the Bloomberg Consumer Comfort Index, which climbed last week to the highest level since April 2008 as Americans grew less pessimistic about their finances.

The confidence index often tracks changes in prices Americans pay at the gas pump, whereas changes in the stock prices have more of an influence on the Michigan index, according to economists.

Meanwhile, The Conference Board’s index of confidence increased to its highest level since February, 2008, and the Commerce Department this week showed the economy grew at a 2.8 percent annual rate in the third quarter of 2010.

Also helping boost consumer confidence was an improvement in the unemployment rate, which fell to 9 percent, the lowest since April 2009. Unemployment had dropped to 9.4 percent in December from 9.8 percent the previous month.

Consumers in the confidence survey said they expect an inflation rate of 3.4 percent over the next 12 months, the same as in January.

Surveyors said rising gasoline prices may have restrained a further increase in consumer sentiment. The average price of a gallon of regular gasoline rose to \$3.29 last week, the highest level since October 2008.

EPA abandons proposed change on used oil regs

The Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) last week reversed itself on a proposal that would have undermined the ability of dealerships to burn used oil collected from do-it-yourself oil changers. The decision means dealerships may continue to burn the used oil they collect, including any from DIYs, as long as their space heaters are vented to the atmosphere and are below 500,000 BTUs in size (assuming there are no state laws to the contrary).

NADA had been pressing the agency to maintain the exemption for collecting “do-it-yourself oil changers,” as it was a key element of an agreement the association had brokered in the 1990s to exempt used oil from the federal Superfund regulations. NADA successfully argued that EPA’s proposal would have increased the amount of used oil improperly disposed of, as it would have caused dealerships to be less willing to accept DIY used oil. EPA’s reversal resulted from a joint NADA Regulatory/Legislative effort involving numerous sets of comments, testimony, agency meetings and congressional oversight.

NADA suggests that dealerships who send their used oil off-site for fuel processing take steps to prevent contamination during storage and to separately collect and ship any DIY used oil they collect.

Save the date! May 16

2011 WANADA OPEN

Lakewood Country Club, Rockville, Md.



The 2011 WANADA Open will be played this year at Lakewood Country Club on Monday, May 16. The registration fee for the 2011 WANADA Open is \$225 per golfer and \$100 for those who wish to only to enjoy cocktails and dinner.

Redesigned by the legendary Rees Jones in 2004, the 7,060-yard, par 72 championship golf course has ten par-4 holes, four par-3 holes and four par-5 holes; a course rating from the championship tees of 74.2; and a slope rating of 133. Lakewood also features a wholly new clubhouse and terrace from which to enjoy a beautiful setting.

Lakewood Country Club hosted the Middle Atlantic Junior Tournament in 2009 and is scheduled to host the 2011 Metropolitan Amateur Tournament and the Maryland State Open Championship in 2014.

Register early by calling or e-mailing Kristina Henry, WANADA’s director of events at (202)-237-7200 ext. 18 or kh@wanada.org

Obesity and aging population is newest auto safety challenge

Auto safety engineers are busy these days adapting to a new reality in American society; how to protect a driving population that is, on average, older as well as more obese.

“The aging and fattening of the population will change the injury problem in crashes,” says researcher Jonathan Rupp of the University of Michigan.

Right now, 27% of the U.S. population is considered obese, Rupp says, and the rate of obesity is increasing by 0.5% to 0.6% per year with no sign of letting up, according to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention.

Obesity mainly affects injury risk in frontal crashes because a heavier than normal occupant requires a bigger, stiffer airbag and wider, stronger seatbelt for proper restraint. Engineers have already developed adaptive restraint technologies that customize belt forces to each occupant and inflatable seatbelts that can spread impact forces over a larger surface area.

According to the U.S. Census Bureau, the number of Americans 65 and over will rise from about 40 million today to about 87 million by 2050. TRW, a major safety-systems supplier, says current and future airbag systems can adapt the stiffness of an inflating bag to occupant size, position and weight, by using special tethers and vents.

Seatbelts also can be equipped with load-limiting devices that stretch and manage high crash energy for both large and small occupants without exerting too much force in specific areas.

TRW has also developed an “active buckle lifter” concept that automatically extends the seatbelt buckle 3.5 ins. (90 mm) for two seconds after the driver or passenger sits, making it more convenient for a large or elderly person to buckle up. It also reduces belt slack during dynamic driving conditions to keep the belt snug and occupant in position in case there is a crash.

In addition to obesity and age issues, safety engineers are looking at everything from developing in-vehicle blood alcohol detection systems to preventing computer hackers from attacking the electronic systems in cars and trucks.

Traffic deaths hit a record low 33,186 in 2009, but NHTSA is not celebrating. Instead, it is looking to ratchet up new rules because it anticipates fatality rates to increase as the economy improves and vehicle miles traveled rise.

Hyundai celebrates 25th anniversary in the U.S.

Gas prices were \$1.20 per gallon, financing topped 10 percent APR and airbags were only just emerging as the latest safety technology when Hyundai brought its first car to the United States. Last week, the company celebrated its 25th anniversary in the U.S.

Since 1986, when the company launched the Hyundai Excel, it has grown into a full-line producer of cars and crossovers, and today there are more than four million Hyundais on the road and the company has sold more than 6.6 million vehicles here. In 2010, sales topped 538,000,

making Hyundai the sixth best-selling brand in the country, behind only Toyota, Honda, Nissan, Ford, and Chevrolet.

Today Hyundai also produces over 400,000 units of Sonata, Elantra and Santa Fe models in assembly plants in Alabama and Georgia and employs more than 4,000 workers there, with total U.S. employment, including suppliers and dealers, of over 45,000.

“As far as we’ve come since 1986, we feel we’re in the early stages of connecting the Hyundai brand to the U.S. consumer,” said John Krafcik, president and CEO, Hyundai Motor America.

Hyundai is introducing three new models, the Veloster, a 3-door 40-mpg sporty coupe and the all-new 4-door and 5-door versions of the Accent. The company is also completing its state-of-the-art headquarters in Fountain Valley, Calif.

Financial protection for seniors

A public forum in Mont Co., Mar. 23

WANADA member Robert Fogarty (Sport Automotive) calls upon fellow WANADA members to help spread the word regarding a public forum the Montgomery County Advisory Committee on Consumer Protection will host to examine financial issues facing seniors. The meeting is scheduled for Wednesday, March 23 from 6 to 8 p.m., at the Charter House, 1316 Fenwick Lane, Silver Spring. Fogarty, a business member of the advisory committee, says Montgomery County Council President Valerie Ervin will open the event, which is available as a public service to all who come out.

Entitled, “Financial Fraud: Seniors Fight Back,” the free forum will be moderated by Beacon Newspaper publisher Stuart Rosenthal, who will lead a discussion with experts from the County’s Office of Consumer Protection (OCP), the Maryland Long Term Care Ombudsman Program and the Montgomery County State’s Attorney’s Office.

“Over this last year, our Office of Consumer Protection has seen a dramatic increase in complaints involving issues that adversely affect the lives of county seniors,” said Ervin. “We look forward to having an opportunity to discuss the current situation with the many stakeholders and members of the public to determine if there is anything else that the county government can do to help.”

The forum will address a number of topics including the financial exploitation of seniors, long term care medical and financial issues, and elder care legal issues. Light refreshments will be offered.

WANADA Board approves new Kindred-Line members

At its regular meeting last week, the WANADA Board approved the membership of the following Kindred-Line applicants:

Penney Design Group, LLC

8170 Woodmont Ave., Suite 450

Bethesda, MD 20817

(301) 526-9069

Usual Rep: Jonathan Penny, AIA, President

Architectural services for new or renovation projects, planning and facilities analysis.

Rosenfield & Co.

The Citrus Center

255 South Orange Ave., Suite 1225

Orlando, FL 32801

Usual Rep: Kenneth Rosenfield, Managing Partner

Tax and accounting services

WANADA welcomes these new members to the association and encourages their active involvement in Washington area dealer community affairs.

Staying ahead ...

Those who agree with us may not be right, but we admire their astuteness.

--Cullen Hightower