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November 2011

2012 Chevrolet Volt Test Drive

The Vehicle:

- MSRP: Starting at \$31,145; \$0-7,500 tax credit
- Electric and gas powered 4 door, 4 passenger
- Electric: EPA-estimated 35-mile range based on 94 MPGe
- Gas: 9.3 gallon gas electric generator. 340-mile range based on 35 MPG city/40 highway (Actual ranges vary with conditions)
- Full charge time is 4 or 10 hours depending on docking station through a regular household outlet.
- 3 drive modes: Normal, Sport (quicker response) and Mountain (hills)
- Top speed: 100mph
- Mobile application and computer program that allows you to lock, unlock and check power levels

The Test Drive:

I was able to test drive a fully loaded Volt with extras such as leather, navigation, reverse camera and Bose stereo. Upon first glance, the Volt was eye catching with its sleek and sporty appearance. Unplugging the car was very simple. The charging kit had a convenient handle; the cord wrapped neatly around the unit which showed battery level lights. The plug itself was the size of my hand with a bottom button you push with your fingers to release it from the vehicle.

Sitting inside, the interior of the Volt was equipped with black leather, chrome accents and silver paneling. The seats were firm and supportive. The airbag safety

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Upcoming Events

Linc Service Continuing Education Conference
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system consists of dual-stage front, side-impact and knee airbags for driver and front passenger. There are also roof-mounted airbags positioned to cushion side-impact of all passengers' heads. Due to the relatively narrow rear seating, a third seating position in the rear didn't seem possible. Instead, they inserted cup holders which acted like a divider between the seats, giving rear passengers the feel of bucket seats.

Recognizing the key was in my pocket, the push to start power button glowed and blinked blue. Pushing the power button, the car turned on quietly with two digital displays, one behind the steering wheel and another in the center of the dashboard. The steering wheel display shows your battery power, miles available to drive and the gears. It also had an efficiency gauge that showed a green ball when the vehicle was being driven at optimal battery power. Keeping the vehicle in the optimal range came to be a difficult feature requiring substantial effort and could be viewed as a driving distraction to some.

The center display was touch screen and had many view options for the power information, radio, navigation, and more. The dashboard, while looking like something out of an F16 fighter jet, was easy to use and the buttons were touch-sensitive as well. On-Star was installed inside the ceiling panel and also has a mobile app which locks and unlocks the car, shows your battery charge level and more.

Taking off into city driving conditions, the car was very quiet and smooth. The acceleration felt comparable to a small four cylinder gas car and the brakes were touchy, requiring more effort than a standard vehicle to come to a complete stop. The brake system has electro-hydraulic power, electronic stability control and a regenerative system on front brakes. The feel of braking system was very noticeable at first, but easy to get used to. Traveling onto the highway was also smooth with a decently tight feel while cornering the onramp. The Volt smoothly and quickly accelerated to 80 mph. The vehicle also had interesting window designs, which made blind spot visibility excellent. Its hatchback windows allowed me to see directly and surprising low behind the vehicle. The reverse camera and alerts were helpful when parking.

Overall, the Volt has some shock value with all pun intended. The environmental and financial benefits along with the look and feel of the vehicle were very appealing. The 35 mile electric driving range is perfect for drivers with short daily commute. Those traveling

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We'd love to hear your questions, comments or suggestions. Please [contact](#) us.

Sincerely,

Jessica Heizer
Merchants Leasing

About Us

Merchants Leasing is a full-service leasing company committed to developing tailored fleet programs for its customers. It goes further to offer a unique No Risk closed-end lease option and a comprehensive choice of leasing programs and fleet solutions. In addition to its wide range of vehicles for lease, customers can take advantage of Merchants insurance and maintenance programs, roadside assistance, telematics, fuel cards, local and nationwide delivery, and expert fleet management and administration.

Headquartered in Greater Manchester, NH, Merchants is part of the Merchants Automotive

longer distances will also benefit from the 35 miles of electric power then the 9.3 gallon gas generator will kick in supplying more electricity to reach a total of 340 miles. The starting price point is mid-range around \$31,000. For all the bells and whistles, you're looking at about \$45,000.

Interested in learning more about plug in electric vehicles, tax incentives, and other alternative and advanced technologies? Visit the US Department of Energy's [website](#). For more information about the Volt visit www.chevrolet.com.

Winter Driving Conditions

The winter season is approaching fast. Merchants Automotive Group's Service and Parts Director, Drew Young, provided the information below on winter tires and tips for safe winter traveling.

Winter Tires: Do You Need Them?

Equipping your vehicle with snow tires depends on what kind of driving you do and how secure the driver feels when driving in inclement weather. Most of today's cars are front wheel or all wheel drive providing good forward traction. However, drivers should think about how well the vehicle handles while turning and braking. Also, many vehicles are equipped with performance tires rated as "all season." Nevertheless, depending on the tire specifications, they may not be sufficient for winter driving conditions.

It is my strong opinion that vehicles are much safer and more secure when outfitted with a full set of four winter tires instead of two. Checking your air pressure regularly is also important. A drop of 10 degrees Fahrenheit creates a loss of 1 psi. It is best to speak with a tire specialist to discuss your driving needs, find the correct tires, and learn the best way to care for your vehicle in winter driving conditions.

Winter Driving Tips: "Have Enough"

The most important thing about driving in winter conditions is to "have enough."

Be sure to have enough;

TIME to get where you are going. You will be going

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slower than normal and you might encounter an accident that makes you spend some additional time on the road. Leave earlier than normal, whenever possible.

ROOM between you and the vehicle you are following. Give yourself plenty of room to make decisions and react to what happens in front of you. Adapt your driving techniques to the road and weather conditions. Also remember that just because you have anti-lock brakes, traction control, all-wheel drive, 4 wheel drive, etc. you still must safely control the vehicle.

GAS in your vehicle. You might be stuck on the road due to traffic, weather, etc. so be sure you have ample fuel in your tank. Fill the tank the night before the storm is due to hit. In addition, the extra weight will give your vehicle a bit more traction on the road.

SUPPLIES in the trunk. Have on hand a good snow brush, warm clothes, flashlight (with new batteries), even an extra pair of socks, boots, a blanket, scarf, gloves and a hat in the car. Water and non-perishable food is a good idea in case you get stranded.

Hopefully you will never be in a situation where you have to test your survival abilities. Be prepared for the unexpected. Keep your vehicle well maintained inside and out, with proper engine care and tires. Drive safely and "have enough" to weather any storm.

FLEET **SOLUTIONS SPOTLIGHT**

Telematics Success Story: Vehicle Theft Recovery

Founded in the 1960's, Birds Eye Foods is a food marketing company that started their brand with a focus on fruit and vegetable consumer products. Over the years, they expanded their offerings to include snacks, canned meals, and salad dressings. As the company grew, so did their fleet of vehicles delivering the goods. Today, Merchants Leasing proudly provides Birds Eye Foods with a fleet of over 200 vehicles.

Fleet manager Charlie Baker expressed needs for monitoring his delivery vehicles; specifically knowing

where they are, how they are being used, and the vehicles' mechanical condition. Merchants Leasing was able to provide him with the perfect solution: Telematics. As of 2011, Birds Eye has Telematics in over 80 of their fleet vehicles with the number continuing to grow. The company has recognized the need for this type of solution in their fleet, especially recently.

Being able to track the location of a vehicle came in very useful August 30, 2011 when one of Bird Eye's trucks was stolen. Charlie gave his account of the story:

"The morning of Tuesday August 30th at about 10:50am, one of our GPS equipped trucks was stolen in Huntington, West Virginia. The driver called his office and they notified me of the stolen vehicle. I immediately started tracking the truck movement using Merchants' Telematics program which shows street names and cardinal direction. I reported the truck location to the Huntington 911 dispatch center, which then relayed the location to the police. Within five minutes they located the truck and pulled it over. Authorities pursued the thief who fled the scene and was later apprehended. The truck was secured, without damages or product loss, thanks in large part to the onboard GPS. I love happy endings!"

Along with 24/7 vehicle location and stolen vehicle recovery, Telematics also enables:

- Timely vehicle status reporting
- Vehicle speed and idle time
- Diagnostic Trouble Code tracking
- System diagnostics
- Manufacturer recall notifications
- Roadside assistance
- Emissions monitoring
- Scheduled maintenance alerts
- Easy to use automotive grade hardware built for commercial use

With Telematics, you'll be able to utilize your fleet more efficiently; save on fuel and maintenance costs and lower risk for accidents. To learn more about Merchant Leasing Telematics and other great fleet management services, contact us directly at 1-866-6LEASES or visit www.fleetsolutions.com.

FLEETCAST

M E R C H A N T S L E A S I N G

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Episode 10 Now Available for Download

Leasing vs. Reimbursement



In our first video episode of Fleetcast, we talk with Carl Neuberger, Director of New Business Development with Merchants Leasing, about providing company vehicles versus reimbursement. Carl will discuss the pros and cons of these two options to give companies a better understanding of the benefits of each.







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