

FIRST-EVER F-150 DIESEL BY SUE MEAD

Pickups are more popular than ever, with more models and new special edition versions to select from every year. Trucks suit the needs of many buyers for work, and now laden with creature comforts and every modern-day technology and safety feature that today's buyers expect in a vehicle, many people purchase pickups for their lifestyle—driving to the office during the week, carrying goods from Home Depot on the weekend and heading to the hills for getaways. And some buy them just because they're cool.

Two key selling points for diesel are towing and the payback over a gasoline engine. Full-size truck customers looking for high fuel economy while towing and hauling are going to be thrilled with a new option from Ford. The all-new diesel-powered 2018 F-150 is now the sixth engine choice in Ford's best-selling light-duty half-ton pickup line; its 3.0-liter Power Stroke V6 diesel engine boasts 250 horsepower and 440 lb-ft of torque, 11,400 pounds of towing capacity, and 2,020 pounds of payload capacity—while promising 30 mpg on the highway, making it the most fuel-efficient full-size pickup currently on the market, says Ford.

One of the development team's top goals was to make sure it had a refined sound, and it is ultra-quiet, as we discovered when testing it recently on a drive in Colorado.

Another goal was to increase the torque capability. Peak torque arrives at just 1,750 rpm, for maximum acceleration, with strong delivery continuing throughout the rpm range, ideal for towing or hauling heavy loads over long distances. The engine achieves maximum horsepower at 3,250 rpm and is paired with a SelectShift 10-speed automatic transmission that's calibrated specifically for this engine and application. Standard auto start-stop technology also improves fuel efficiency and reduces emissions in city driving.

For greater responsiveness and reduced turbo lag, the Ford truck team chose a high-efficiency variable-geometry turbocharger. A common-rail fuel injection system precisely optimizes performance and fuel efficiency, while high-pressure 29,000-pounds-per-square-inch injection calibration enables smoother, quieter operation with reduced emissions. The diesel engine also features an advanced cooling system (see sidebar).

Ford's new V6 diesel is manufactured using the same compacted-graphite iron block material construction and forged-steel crank found in the 2.7-liter EcoBoost engine, for added strength and durability along with reduced weight. This combines with the high-strength, military-grade aluminum-alloy body introduced in 2015, reducing vehicle weight by up to 700 pounds. ■

F-150 POWER STROKE MODELS

The all-new 3.0-liter V6 Power Stroke diesel engine is available for both 4x2 and 4x4 drivetrains in Lariat, King Ranch and Platinum editions—in SuperCrew trucks with either a 5.5-foot or 6.5-foot bed and SuperCab trucks with a 6.5-foot bed. // The engine is a \$4,000 option (over the standard 2.7-liter EcoBoost) for the Lariat (starting at \$41,515), and a \$3,000 upcharge for the King Ranch (starting at \$51,930), and Platinum (\$54,485) models. // Fleet buyers can find it in XL and XLT work-focused trims; it will also be available in F-150s with the FX4 off-road package. // Ford truck marketing manager Todd Eckert says he expects the diesel engine to comprise about five percent of overall F-150 retail sales.

COOLING: ARIZONA-TESTED

The F-150 with 3.0L V6 Power Stroke diesel features a premium mechanical engine-driven fan and dual radiator shutters for improved high-temperature, high-altitude performance. Ford claims this is a key advantage over electric cooling fans used by competitors. // In testing along the legendary Davis Dam in Arizona, F-150 with the new 3.0-liter Power Stroke V6 diesel climbed 13 miles at a 6 percent grade in temperatures above 100 degrees, maintaining consistent power output throughout.

FUEL MILEAGE

MPG4X2: 22/30/25 (city/hwy/comb)
4X4: 20/25/22 (city/hwy/comb)



F-150 V6 Power Stroke diesel's only direct (half-ton) competitor is the Ram 1500 EcoDiesel, at least until General Motors introduces its new light-duty diesel for the Chevrolet Silverado and its GMC Sierra. The Nissan Titan XD with Cummins V8 diesel is in a heavier category, between half-ton and three-quarter-ton.