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Explorer offers smooth, stable ride

Continued from pg. 3

This engine is expected to deliver a 30 per cent improvement in fuel economy and should be available later in 2011.

Ride and handling are as good as many premium SUV and crossovers I've driven, with a smooth, stable ride and minimal lean in the corners. Available in both FWD and 4WD, the Explorer was benchmarked against luxury SUVs like BMW X5 and Audi Q7, and it shows in the driving dynamics.

The 2011 Explorer may look like plush soft-roader, but as I discovered during an afternoon of plying deeply rutted trails up and over steep hills, through muddy water and even a sand pit, this SUV can handle more than I'd attempt in any vehicle I respected.

At the heart of this ability is Ford's Terrain Management System. Rather than using a typical '4WD-low' setting, which according to company officials confuses or intimidates many drivers, this system offers four intuitive settings that eliminate any guesswork: Normal, Mud/Ruts, Sand and Snow.

Keeping you safe, whether on or off road, is a bevy of safety and handling technologies that in the interest of space, I'll limit to just a few.

One of these, as mentioned earlier, is the optional inflatable second-row seatbelts. These spread the impact over five times more area than conventional seatbelts and are ideal for vulnerable passengers like children and the elderly.

Another is Curve Control, which debuts on the Explorer. It can sense when the vehi-

cle is entering a curve too quickly and with smart braking, can cut speed by up to 16 km/h in about one second.

Other available features include a blind spot information system with cross traffic-alert, adaptive cruise control, collision warning with brake support and more.

The 2011 Explorer is available in three trim levels: base, XLT and Limited, FWD or 4WD and with both V6 and EcoBoost engines depending on trim.

Pricing starts at \$29,999 for the base front driver and tops out at \$44,199 for the Limited V6 4WD (not including additional packages).

There's much more to be said regarding Explorer's many standard and available features.

2011 Ford Explorer SUV at a glance:

BODY STYLE: mid-size SUV

DRIVE METHOD: front-engine, intelligent four-wheel-drive or front wheel drive

ENGINES: 3.5-litre Ti-VCT V6 (290 hp and 255 lb/ft of torque); turbocharged 2.0-litre EcoBoost four cylinder (237 hp and 255 lb/ft of torque)

TOWING CAPACITY: 5,000 lbs when equipped with 3.5-litre V6

FUEL ECONOMY: (FWD V6) 11.9/8.0L/100 km

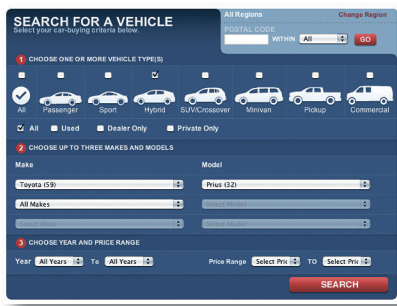
PRICE: base V6 FWD \$29,999; base V6 4WD \$32,999; XLT V6 4WD \$38,899; Limited V6 4WD \$44,199

WEBSITE: www.ford.ca

It's easy as 1, 2, 3...

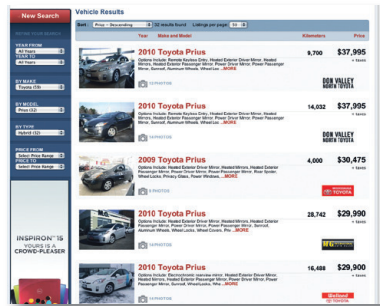
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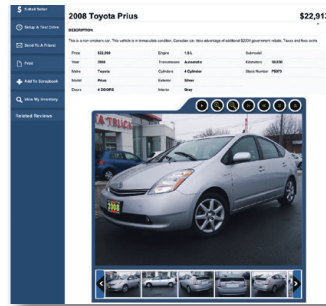
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