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2005 MAZDA TRIBUTE: PUTTING THE “SPORT” IN SPORT UTILITY VEHICLE

— Mazda’s Sporty SUV Receives New Engine, Exterior and Interior Upgrades —

IRVINE, Calif. — The Mazda Tribute is a Sport Utility Vehicle (SUV) with the soul of a sports car. Tribute’s handling, responsiveness and steering feel are fine-tuned to a level seldom associated with SUVs, but long associated with Mazdas. The 2005 Tribute arrived in dealerships in mid-2004 with a new four-cylinder engine, styling changes and numerous upgrades inside and out, and carries into the full 2005 model year unchanged.

“With a new 2.3-liter engine, a restyled exterior, modified suspension and a new interior that includes an available premium seven-speaker audio system, the 2005 Tribute is a big player in the small SUV class,” said Scott Landgraf, Tribute vehicle line manager for Mazda North American Operations. “We focused on a cleaner design for both the exterior and interior and added a new electronic four-wheel-drive system as well as a new four-cylinder engine that produces more power than previous models.”

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In keeping with Mazda's vehicle nomenclature, Tribute now is available in two trim levels, *i* and *s*, instead of the previous DX, LX and ES designations. The new 2.3-liter, four-cylinder *i* engine replaces the DX engine and produces 153 horsepower and 152 lb-ft of torque, significantly more than the 130 horsepower and 135 lb-ft torque of the 2.0-liter, four-cylinder in the DX. The additional torque is produced on a broader, flatter curve for better mid-range throttle response. The increase in power also allows the new *i* engine to be mated to a four-speed electronically controlled automatic transmission or five-speed manual (DX was available only with a five-speed manual). The standard five-speed manual transmission in the *i* has a new gear box with short, positive throws and reduced shift efforts.

Mazda's new 2.3-liter powerplant is approximately 40 pounds lighter than last year, leading directly to improved fuel economy and vehicle dynamics. And for better long-term performance, the cylinder head's Dual Overhead Cam (DOHC) design uses Direct Acting Mechanical Bucket (DAMB) tappets and an aluminum alloy, high-flow cylinder head with press-fit valve seats.

The *s* model sports a 3.0-liter, 24-valve, V-6 engine and like previous LX and ES models, comes paired with a four-speed electronically controlled automatic transmission. At 200 peak horsepower and 193 lb-ft of torque, it is one of the most powerful engines in the segment.

Both engine setups come with the option of Mazda's intelligent full-time four-wheel-drive system. The new electronic system, called Active Torque Control Coupling (ATCC), uses an electromagnetic clutch to control the amount of torque sent to the rear wheels. Unlike Tribute's previous Rotary Blade Coupling (RBC) or other companies' conventional four-wheel-drive systems, torque split now is managed precisely by the vehicle's engine-control computer, linking the system directly to other vehicle information like speed, gear position and throttle position. The amount of torque split apportioned to the rear wheels then can be optimized for a variety of conditions beyond simple traction and wheel-speed difference between the front and rear wheels.

Due to ATCC's small component size and ability to account for different driving characteristics and road conditions, it distributes the most suitable and well-balanced torque split between front and rear wheels, providing improved fuel economy and drivability. Furthermore, ATCC reacts faster than a hydraulic system because there is no lag time waiting for a viscous fluid to heat up before splitting power between axles. And because the system is always on, the power transfer is performed seamlessly to the driver.

New for the 2005 Tribute on both *i* and *s* models is a standard anti-lock braking system (ABS) with electronic brakeforce distribution (EBD).

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A MacPherson front and multi-link rear suspension with increased spring rates and larger front stabilizer bars gives the 2005 Tribute a taut but comfortable ride. Since

handling and drivability have been at the core of Tribute's values since the vehicle's launch, the vehicle is steady and reassuring. The upgraded suspension combines with larger, redesigned 16-inch alloy wheels wrapped in 235/70R-16 all-season tires to relay exceptional road feedback to the driver.

The redesigned wheels only "scratch the surface" of the Tribute's new exterior look. As with the MAZDA6, MAZDA3 and RX-8, Tribute's new exterior design incorporates athletic, aggressive and upscale styling. A cleaner front fascia incorporates a new Mazda front grille and new headlight (*i* and *s*) and fog lamp fixtures (*s*). The front fascia wraps neatly around the front fenders into new wheel arch molding designs, body-color dual power remote side-view mirrors, sectioned side trim and rocker panel molding. The rear paneling contours smartly into a new rear fascia that houses a sportier, vertical taillight design and a rear liftgate with flip-up glass.

Five new colors have been added to Tribute's palate, including Stormfront Grey Metallic, Pebble Ash Metallic, Dark Titanium, Mystic Black and Platinum Metallic. Classic White, Blazing Copper Metallic, Redfire Metallic and Lapis Blue Metallic remain in the Tribute color lineup.

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The Tribute's changes are more than just skin deep. Added sound-absorbing panels and tighter sealing measures reduce cabin noise, while the balance shaft (a gear-driven counter rotating weight system that greatly reduces engine vibration) on the new 2.3-liter engine and new engine mounts on the 3.0-liter make the powertrains smoother

and quieter than ever. A new flow-through console and floor-mounted gear shifter replaces the previous column shifter so as not to block the center stack controls at any time. A new center instrument panel is treated with a black maple finish and four modern silver gauge bezels prominently display driving information. The heating/ventilation/air conditioning (HVAC) system has been redesigned with intuitively placed knobs and controls.

Revisions to the Tribute's triple-H-construction body structure improve performance in offset frontal crashes and passenger-seat weight-sensing technology is standard on both models. Dual front airbags are standard, and side impact air curtains and side airbags with rollover protection come as an option on **s** models.

The Tribute's front seat belts are designed to offer driver and passenger a full range of motion during normal conditions but act to provide maximum protection in the event of an accident. Pre-tensioners immediately reduce slack in the belts during the first instant of certain impacts. A force limiter then acts to modulate the belt's pressure on the occupant's chest, helping prevent seat-belt-related injuries.

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Replacing the rear bench seat in the *i* is a standard 60-40 split rear seat back with extra reinforcement for improved versatility and occupant safety (already standard on **s** models). The rear seat also gets an adjustable center position headrest and center three-point safety belt in both *i* and **s** trim levels.

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Given the importance of music in the lives of its potential buyers, the Tribute comes standard with a 100-watt AM/FM/CD audio system, and all head units in the 2005 Tribute come standard with Sirius® satellite radio-ready capability. Mazda dealers need only add an antenna and satellite receiver kit (\$399 not including installation) and customers need only subscribe to activate the Sirius system. A powerful 190-watt AM/FM/cassette/six-disc CD audio system is available on *s* models and features seven speakers, including a 90-watt subwoofer.

Other option packages include: a six-way power driver's seat, moon roof, overhead storage, retractable cargo cover, leather seats, leather-wrapped steering wheel, vinyl door trim, and heated front seats and side-view mirrors.

The first 2005 Mazda Tributes began arriving at Mazda dealerships in February 2004. Pricing start at \$19,630 for the *i* and \$22,890 for the *s* model.

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Like every Mazda, the Tribute comes with a four-year roadside assistance program. With a call to a toll-free number, Tribute owners can access roadside assistance 24 hours a day, 365 days a year throughout the United States and Canada.

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For all 2004 and 2005 Mazda vehicles, the company will provide a free loaner car in the event a warrantable condition requires the use of alternative transportation.

The 2005 Mazda Tribute is covered by a comprehensive four-year/50,000-mile warranty that covers every part on the vehicle except those subject to normal wear. In addition, the Tribute is covered by a five-year/unlimited-mileage corrosion warranty.

Mazda North American Operations is responsible for the sales and marketing, customer parts and service support of Mazda vehicles in the United States.

Headquartered in Irvine, Calif., MNAO has more than 700 dealerships nationwide.

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