

GM reports lower 4Q sales, inventories after strike

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General Motors reported lower fourth-quarter car sales Friday as a lengthy US worker strike continued to pinch auto inventories.

The biggest US automaker delivered 735,909 vehicles during the quarter ending December 31, down 6.3 percent from the year-ago period.

At year's end, the company had inventories of 616,023, down 18.4 percent.

Although the figures demonstrated the continued drag from a 40-day strike that ended in late October, executives touted strong sales of larger sport utility vehicles and pickup trucks.

Sales of "full-size" pickup trucks and SUVs topped one million during the year.

"Our fourth-quarter stocks were leaner than we wanted, but as we get ready to launch our all-new full-size SUVs, we look forward to another solid year in 2020," said GM vice president for US sales Kurt McNeil.

"We've focused our resources on what our customers want -- crossovers and trucks -- and that has paid off."

GM had previously signaled that the strike would weigh on fourth-quarter results, saying in October that the stoppage would cut about \$3 billion from 2019 earnings.

The United Auto Workers strike ended after the union on October 25 ratified a new contract that boosted pay and contained [health care costs](#), but allowed the automaker to permanently shut four plants.

"As of late October, GM plants are back up and running, and we are working to produce every vehicle we can," a GM spokeswoman said Friday.

For all of 2019, GM reported sales of 2.9 million, down 2.3 percent.

Among other large companies, Fiat Chrysler reported 542,519 car sales during the fourth quarter, down two percent. For the year, FCA's sales

dipped one percent to 2.2 million.

FCA said it scored records for its Ram pickup trucks and its Dodge Charger muscle car. But it experienced declines in its Jeep Cherokee.

Toyota reported annual sales of 2.4 million, down 1.8 percent after a dip in December.

Although US auto sales have declined from their peak levels of a few years ago, analysts have projected annual deliveries to again top 17 million, a robust level.

The solid sales in 2019 were the result of a strong US labor market, lower interest rates and an increase in fleet sales to government and corporate customers.

Shares of GM fell 1.6 percent to \$36.44 in midday trading, while Fiat Chrysler dropped 2.8 percent to \$14.61 and Toyota dipped 0.7 percent to \$141.05.

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