

Toyota unveils family of Prius hybrids

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The new Toyota Prius C Concept vehicle makes its debut at the 2011 North American International Auto Show in Detroit, Michigan.

Toyota unveiled new siblings for its popular Prius hybrid Monday, introducing a brand new midsized wagon, a plug-in, and a compact Prius to journalists at the Detroit auto show.

The family was launched as Toyota struggles to rebuild its once-stellar reputation after it was rocked by a series of mass recalls and its top executives were raked over the coals at congressional hearings for failing to report the deadly defects sooner.

Akio Toyoda, the Japanese automaker's president and grandson of its founder, was on hand Monday to unveil the new [Prius](#) line and underline Toyota's commitment to safety and quality.

"We are honored and humbled that Toyota was the number one retail

brand in the US last year, regaining the highest consideration among consumers, he told reporters.

"These achievements during a difficult year were made possible through the outstanding efforts of Toyota associates, dealers, and suppliers, and the support of loyal customers all across America."

"We intend to continue to earn that customer loyalty with even greater dedication to quality, safety, and customer care."

The new vehicles are part of the Japanese automaker's strategy to introduce seven entirely new hybrids, and four updated ones, to its global lineup over the next two years.

Toyota will also introduce a fully-electric vehicle in 2012 and a [hydrogen fuel cell](#) powered by 2015.

"I've got to tell you, with gas prices heading toward four dollars a gallon and Prius sales rising I'm really glad this new family is coming," said Bob Carter, Toyota Division group vice president and general manager.

The Prius v wagon will reach US showrooms this summer while the plug-in and compact models are scheduled for release in early 2012.

A slightly larger version of the original Prius, the Prius v offers 50 percent more cargo space and the best fuel economy rating of any sport utility vehicle or wagon on the market, Carter said.

The plug-in Prius will be able to drive 13 miles (21 kilometers) on electric power before switching over to its fuel-efficient gasoline powered engine.

That's a significantly shorter range than the 40 miles (64 kilometers) of

pure electric achieved by General Motors's flag-ship plug-in hybrid Chevy Volt, which hit showrooms last month.

But Carter said the smaller battery pack allows for a lower price, better [fuel economy](#) in hybrid mode because of less weight, and a faster recharge.

Carter said Toyota expects to sell between 12,000 and 20,000 plug-in Prius vehicles in the first 12 months of sales.

GM said recently it is boosting production to 45,000 Volts from the originally scheduled 30,000 vehicles due to strong demand.

The compact Prius c will come in at a much lower price than the mid-sized original and will be targeted at younger buyers.

Toyota has sold more than 955,000 Prius vehicles since it was introduced in 2000.

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