



# FACT SHEET

## 2007 FORD/AAA STUDENT AUTO SKILLS COMPETITION

### COMPETITION

- 7,504 high school juniors and seniors enrolled in automotive technology programs throughout the United States are competing in the 2007 Ford/AAA Student Auto Skills competition for more than \$6 million in prizes and scholarships.
- The best two-student teams from each participating school -- determined by an on-line exam -- advance to state finals. There, they race the clock to correctly diagnose and repair a deliberately "bugged" Ford car. A combination of the on-line and hands-on scores determines a championship team from each state. Exams were given on-line this year for the first time, replacing the traditional hand-written tests, to provide faster results and duplicate the types of computer-based tests automotive organizations and manufacturers provide to professional technicians.
- The 50 state championship teams meet June 24-26 for the national finals at Ford Headquarters in Dearborn, Michigan. After a second exam, the teams face off on Tuesday, June 26, when they again must diagnose and repair identically "bugged" Ford automobiles in a quest to deliver a "perfect" vehicle as quickly as possible to competition judges. As at the state level, the team with the combined best scores for the hands-on competition and the exam wins the title of national champion.
- The auto skills competition was founded in 1949 and sponsored by various organizations dedicated to quality auto service. AAA has co-sponsored the competition since 1984. Ford Motor Company joined AAA in co-sponsoring the Ford/AAA Student Auto Skills competition in 1994.

### AUTOMOTIVE SERVICE TECHNICIANS

- The U.S. Department of Labor's Bureau of Labor Statistics (BLS) estimates the auto industry will have an average of 34,000 job openings per year through 2014, based on growth and net replacement needs.
- Automotive service technicians held about 875,000 jobs in 2006, according to the U.S. Census Bureau. The majority worked for automotive repair and maintenance shops, automobile dealers, and retailers and wholesalers of automotive parts, accessories and supplies.
- The Bureau of Labor Statistics 2006-2007 *Occupational Outlook Handbook* reported that formal automotive technician training is the best preparation for jobs as automotive service technicians and mechanics.
- Fulltime automobile technicians earned an average hourly wage of \$15.89 in May 2005 according to the BLS, and nearly half worked more than 40 hours a week. The highest 10 percent earned more than \$26.45 per hour. Automotive service technicians working for local governments or automotive dealers averaged more than \$40,000 annually, a Bureau survey found.
- Industry-wide, approximately 90 percent of auto shop owners and managers offer employee benefits such as paid vacations. Additionally, more than half offer retirement plans, according to PayScale Research.
- The continued increase in the number of automobiles in the United States, the retirement of experienced workers, and the ongoing lack of qualified workers make the automotive service industry a lucrative field to enter. The Bureau of Labor Statistics predicted, "Opportunities should be very good for automotive service technicians and mechanics with diagnostic and problem-solving skills, knowledge of electronics and mathematics, and mechanical aptitude." (U.S. Department of Labor *Occupational Outlook Handbook*, 2006-2007 edition.)
- In 2005, the most recent year for which figures are available, the automotive mechanical and electrical repair and maintenance industry earned an estimated \$44 billion. The industry has averaged 3.3 percent growth per year since 1998, according to the U.S. Census Bureau.
- According to *Aftermarket Business* magazine's 10<sup>th</sup> Annual Consumer Attitude Study in July 2006, 75 percent of the survey's respondents reported that their vehicle receives maintenance on a regular schedule, and only six percent of respondents said they wait until a repair is absolutely necessary before visiting a repair shop.

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- Ford/AAA Student Auto Skills and AAA's Approved Auto Repair Program are designed to boost consumer confidence in the

automotive repair industry and ensure that vehicles on the road are safer and more reliable to drive.

- Advancements in automobile safety, fuel management and comfort have led to an increasing reliance on computers and electronic components that make cars operate effectively. Today's auto technicians must be well educated and continue training to stay on the cutting edge of advances in computer and electronic technology. They also must be skilled in all aspects of mechanical repair procedures and knowledgeable about service intervals and similar maintenance requirements of a wide variety of automotive vehicles.
- Almost 15 percent of automotive technicians are self-employed, according to a 2004 Bureau of Labor Statistics survey.

### **ENVIRONMENTAL/ENERGY**

- Continued record-high gasoline prices in the United States have spurred an increase in demand for vehicles that operate with fuel-efficiency.
- To achieve maximum fuel economy, a vehicle must be in top condition. Common maintenance items that affect fuel economy include lubrication, spark plugs, air filters, and tire inflation. Computer sensors automatically calibrate fuel flow, mixture and ignition to increase fuel economy and performance.
- A misfiring spark plug, for example, can reduce fuel economy by as much as 30 percent.
- Servicing various alternative fuel vehicles already is challenging the automotive service industry and will do so even more in the future as alternate fuel technology advances. Hybrid vehicles that use electricity and gasoline, as well as fuel-cell vehicles that operate on hydrogen, require specially trained technicians and new service procedures.
- The average car's fuel efficiency has almost doubled in the last 25 years from about 16 mpg to about 30 mpg today, according to the U.S. Department of Transportation.

### **AAA APPROVED AUTO REPAIR PROGRAM**

- AAA's Approved Auto Repair program independently inspects and approves more than 7,900 repair businesses in North America as a service to AAA and Canadian Automobile Association (CAA) members and the public. Participating businesses are required to prominently display the AAA Approved Auto Repair sign.
- Launched in 1975, the program is open to new car dealerships, franchised repair facilities and independently owned shops. AAA Approved Auto Repair is the largest independently inspected and approved network of repair facilities in North America.
- AAA's Approved Auto Repair program assists members and the public by identifying automotive repair facilities that meet the association's stringent criteria for customer satisfaction, equipment, training, warranties and cleanliness. Approved facilities include those offering full service repairs, specialty repairs such as transmissions, and body shop services.
- AAA members receive additional benefits from participating shops, including a minimum of a 12-month/12,000-mile warranty on parts and labor, a written estimate, return of replaced parts (if requested), and a courtesy safety inspection if the owner arranges to have maintenance or repairs performed on the vehicle. AAA will mediate any concerns that a member may have as a result of work performed at an approved facility. Approved facilities are bound by AAA's decision.

### **THE FORD MOTOR COMPANY ASSET AND FACT PROGRAMS**

- The Ford Motor Company's Automotive Service Student Education Training (ASSET) and Ford Accelerated Credential Training (FACT) programs provide trained service technicians for Ford, Lincoln, and Mercury dealerships.
- The ASSET and FACT programs equip graduates with technical skills enabling them to service today's sophisticated vehicles.
- Ford Motor Company provides vehicles, equipment, tools, and Ford technical training curriculum. Participating schools provide instruction in an automotive lab that simulates a dealership environment.
- Most graduates of these programs begin automotive service careers at Ford, Lincoln, and Mercury dealerships.