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## Revived Viper to add bite to Chrysler's lineup

### High-end sports car to be built at Conner plant after 2-year hibernation

By Bryce G. Hoffman  
The Detroit News

The Viper is coming back to Detroit.

Chrysler Group LLC said Tuesday that it is reopening its Conner Avenue Assembly Plant to produce the next generation of its vaunted hand-built American supercar. The Auburn Hills automaker plans to employ about 150 people — both hourly and salaried — at the site, which has been closed since production of the previous-generation Viper ended in July 2010.

However, no new hires are planned. Chrysler said hourly employees who previously worked at the Conner plant will be given first priority to return to the factory; the remainder of the positions will be filled by other current Chrysler employees who volunteer to transfer there to work on the SRT Viper.

"The next-generation Viper will make its return to the product lineup in late 2012 as a 2013 model," said Ralph Gilles, head of Chrysler's motorsports division and the SRT brand. "We're extremely excited that our ultimate American sports car will continue to live on and be produced exclusively here in the Motor City."

Production is to begin late next year, but some workers already have begun training. No cost estimate has been released for the car, which previously had a base price of \$90,000. Viper enthusiasts were, well, enthusiastic.

**"They're pretty cool cars," said Van Conway, a Birmingham corporate turnaround expert who has owned four of them and still has two in his garage. "There's really nothing out there like them."**

**Conway, who has advised several automotive companies, said Chrysler tried to sell the Viper in the depths of the recent economic crisis and ultimately decided to suspend production. But he said Chrysler's decision to bring back the Viper and produce it in Detroit makes good business sense.**

**"There's a market for the car, but I don't think they're supposed to make money," he said, adding that cars such as the Viper — known as "halo vehicles" — are more**

**symbols than products. "It's kind of a signature. It shows your ability to compete in performance, and that's very important to an automaker."**

Chrysler said it is also an important symbol for the city.

"The reopening of the Conner Avenue Assembly Plant reaffirms Chrysler Group's commitment to the city of Detroit as the only auto manufacturer with two assembly plants in the city," the automaker said in a statement.

Originally sold as a Dodge, the Viper was introduced in 1992. More than 22,000 were built before production ended last year. Production at the Conner Avenue plant averaged 12 vehicles a day.

[bhoffman@detnews.com](mailto:bhoffman@detnews.com)

(313) 222-2443