

## **Our First Place pick: Chevy Silverado 2500**

Just out of bankruptcy when this truck was released last spring means it's vitally important to Chevy's health – and GMs overall. That has to be at least one strong reason for the massive improvement in strength of the chassis and the leap forward in the electronics. The body got little attention, but in this world that is the least of buyers concerns.

### **What's New in the HD Chevy:**

- Frame is now fully boxed and is five times stiffer than its predecessor.
- The brake rotors are larger, and the leaf springs are three-inches wide now.
- The front end is now adequate for all snow plowing duties (6,000 lb).
- The upgraded 6.6L Duramax V8 diesel makes 397 hp and 765 ft. lb of torque.
- New limits are 17,000 lb for conventional towing and 21,700 lb fifth wheel towing
- GM claims an 11% improvement in fuel economy.
- Payload - 4,192 lb.
- A new "smart" exhaust brake (on the diesel) is tied into the transmission downshifts via electronic sensors and the brake pedal.
- The integrated brake controller now has a trailer sway control feature.
- Hill Start Assist
- Unaided starting (on diesel) down to -29C

**Empty Test Loop:** GM has put all its R&D dollars into a great leap forward in chassis and powertrain development for this truck - however this means changes to the body and interior were negligible. Body style-wise we were OK, but the interior design is now the oldest and it is tired. On the road the ride is very firm now, but the road manners steady. I noted that the interior soundproofing has been improved. Dash is functional and remains the same. Rear seats flip up for storage, but the floor is not flat like Ford's.

**Towing/Loaded:** The proven Duramax has been upgraded and now easily pulls up to its limit. Now with the stiffer chassis, towing feels more confident. The veteran Allison transmission is smooth regardless of the

amount of weight towed – frankly it’s excellent. It also has a manual “tap up/tap down” shift feature along with a tow-haul setting. The smart engine brake works with the transmission to downshift and hold the load on grades - no matter how severe.

GM has deleted the four-pin electrical trailer connector from its standard hook-up – Ford and Ram have kept both them; however it is well placed in the bumper. GM has an optional back-up camera for the lone driver hooking up a trailer

The mirrors are alright – not great though.

**Off-Road:** What GM offers for unique off-road traction is a neat mechanical differential locker built by Eaton. This locker has an internal spring-loaded pendulum that reacts to centrifugal force – flying out when there is wheel slippage and locking the gear set. It’s completely automatic and when engaged gives the 4WD system as much as the back end slips. Excellent.

**Conclusions:** This GM Silverado HD is the best ever – for GM. But this market is highly competitive so at best I can say is that this effort has put GM back in the game with Ford. That was the consensus among the judges too. Where it pulls just slightly ahead of the Ford is in the proven reputation of its powertrain. This feature carried it to First Place this year.