

Our Second Place pick: Ford F350 * *(An F250 was not available, however with the exception of the increased load limits on the F350 the truck is identical to the 3/4 –ton version.)

This 2011 Ford is by far the most extensively upgraded version of the SuperDuty ever. All new engine, all new transmission encased in the most powerful chassis the line has ever released. This is great and scary – all at the same time. The potential for a great truck is there, however prudence suggests that with this many new components a period of time is needed to make sure they all mesh in the real world.

What's New in this HD Ford:

- New 6.7L Power Stroke diesel engine is designed by Ford and built by Ford; 400 hp and 800 lb ft of torque.
- Max payload 6,524 lb
- Conventional towing is 16,000 lb and fifth-wheel towing is 24,400 lb.
- New six-speed transmission has a manual “SelectShift” feature as well as towhaul mode.
- This powertrain combination now offers a PTO option
- Ford's Trailer Sway Control (TSC) is added to the Super Duty lineup. TSC is integrated with AdvanceTrac with Roll Stability Control; now standard on all single rear wheel trucks.
- Hill Start Assist
- Hill Decent Control
- A new steering gear setup feels much more precise than its predecessor.
- Interior has been tweaked and is fresh

Empty Test Loop: The new dash has clear large gauges and a larger centre information screen (4.2-inchs) that clearly displays info from the radio settings to the trailer connections. It's easy to see, bright and can be used with steering wheel mounted five-way buttons.

This Ford (granted it was the one-ton) is the stiffest ever and so I found it had a tendency to skitter on the washboard during my test drive. On the other hand, the new steering is confident with good on-centre feel.

The new engine is a torque monster, yet vibration is low, and noise is well controlled. Ford claims as much as 20% improvement in fuel economy

over the outgoing 6.4L (which isn't hard considering how thirsty it was). The signal stalk has been changed; it no longer "sticks" when activated – I find it annoying. Several extra inches of floor space have been added to the new Super Duty Crew – most of which finds its way into the rear seat area. With the seats folded the large flat floor lends itself to easy loading and unloading of equipment, tools or groceries.

Towing/Loaded: Ford has powered mirrors that extend for trailer towing. I noted that Ford's backup camera also doubles as a convenient way to hook up a trailer alone. They also offer 4 & 7-pin connectors, but it's still located below the bumper in the dirtiest location, why? Ford's tailgate step and handle is a nice feature that has yet to be copied by the others.

The new TorqShift six-speed transmission has given me pause. Under load I had some rough up-shifts; while it didn't happen regularly it was noticeable. On-road and while towing the truck was confident.

Off-Road: Shift on the fly controls for 4WD on the Ford work well, and they also offer a button operated electronic rear differential locker (as opposed to the automatic mechanical GM system) and Ford was the only one to have manually locking front hubs. Clearance was good, very rugged off-road performance.

Conclusions: The Super Duty, gets a "power dome" and a large Super Duty logo stamped into the upper grille. This look is polarizing – buyers love it or hate it. You decide. As for under the hood, Ford has made a huge investment in the new engine and associated systems. We just worry a bit about that transmission. At first blush though this effort looks very good.