

EXCLUSIVE: '96 TAURUS AND SABLE UNVEILED

They won't go on sale until this fall, but here's the first official close-up look at FoMoCo's all-new DN101 platform-mates, better known as the Ford Taurus and Mercury Sable. Unlike the last "all-new" versions of these cars, which arrived for the '92 model year, no one can dispute that the '96s differ markedly from the current versions. Highly aerodynamic, both are lower and slightly longer than the '95s.

Ford Taurus



Front and rear fascia treatments are unique; however, the two share most of the glass and exterior body panels.

Structural integrity is enhanced by a new "Safety Cell" design. This provides a steel beam across the front of the passenger compartment and additional reinforcing beams in the door and roof areas to better dissipate impact energy and protect the passenger compartment against intrusions.

Along with standard dual front airbags, the center rear passenger seat in both cars will be equipped with a harness-style safety belt that goes over both shoulders. Revised seats feature an "anti-submarining" design to reduce the chances of a pas-

senger sliding forward and under the restraint during an emergency stop. Anti-lock brakes will be standard on all Sables and the Taurus LX, but will remain optional on the Taurus GL.

Two different engines will power the base and up-level cars, with a third to be used exclusively in the Taurus SHO. The Taurus GL and Sable GS will use a revised version of the existing 3.0-liter Vulcan V-6. Although expected to produce about the same 140 horses as the current iteration, it will receive a new electronic management package for improved smoothness and increased efficiency. The standard engine in the Taurus LX and Sable LS will be the 3.0-liter 24-valve DOHC Duratec V-6, which is also

Mercury Sable



likely to produce about the same 170 horses as it now does in the new Ford Contour/Mercury Mystique. The previous uplevel 3.8-liter V-6 gets dropped from the lineup. The Taurus SHO is reportedly in line for an underhood booster shot in the form of a new Yamaha-developed 3.4-liter twin-cam V-8 that produces about 250 horsepower and will replace both of the current SHO engines (the 220-horse 3.0-liter and the 3.2-liter V-6).