

## 2017 Fleet Management Trends: Compact SUVs

January 2017, By Paul Clinton



*(clockwise upper l. to r.) Photos of 2017 Escape, 2018 Equinox, 2015 Jeep Cherokee, 2017 Rogue courtesy of Ford, GM, FCA, and Nissan.*

Compact SUVs have grown in popularity in recent years and surpassed mid-size sedans as the top selling vehicle category first in 2015 and again in 2016.

Commercial fleets have begun to embrace these vehicles in greater numbers as alternatives to mid-size sedans and trucks, because they offer ergonomic, operational benefits, and remarketing benefits, fleet management companies told AutomotiveFleet.com.

"Once considered an upgrade, compact SUVs have become an increasingly popular choice for many fleets today," said Beth Kandrysawtz, CEO of Motorlease Corp. "While competitive pricing, strong residual values, and increased fuel efficiency make crossovers attractive from a financial standpoint, enhanced ergonomics, greater cargo space, and an all-wheel drive option are enticing benefits from the driver's perspective."

Sales of small SUVs and crossovers increased 4% to 2.73 million in 2016. The Ford

Escape, Toyota RAV4, and Honda CR-V sold more than 300,000 units, while the Nissan Rogue, Chevrolet Equinox, and Jeep Cherokee surpassed 200,000 units, according to GoodCarBadCar.net.



*Kandry Sawtz*



*Donahue*

Commercial fleets have begun to catch up with retail demand for these vehicles, which have found their way into sales fleets that need room for samples and displays, engineering firms that carry equipment, and some service fleets, said Mark Donahue, manager of fleet analytics and corporate communications with Emkay.

"Compact SUV's and mid/small crossovers are becoming an increasingly large segment within the fleet industry," Donahue said.

Sales fleets have also requested more compact SUVs from Donlen, said Cindy Gomez, vice president of vehicle acquisition services.

"We have experienced an increase in crossover/SUV vehicles versus sedans over the past year," Gomez said. "There are several factors that have caused this shift, and I can see more of the sales type of fleet utilizing these types of assets. When you compare the wheelbase, fuel economy and width of a crossover/SUV to a mid/full sized sedan, they are very similar. However, with a crossover/SUV, there is more cargo area for the driver to store materials and still have the same passenger capacity."



*Gomez*



*Coffey*

Compact SUVs have also grown in popularity with HR managers, who view them as a way to increase employee satisfaction, said Tom Coffey, vice president of sales and marketing with Merchants Fleet Management.

"Smaller SUVs have come into more popular use as fleet managers and HR directors have seen them as suitable replacements for sedans and even small pickups while great employee satisfaction and retention tools," Coffey said.

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