

FORD:

F-series:

The popular F-series (F-450/F-550) chassis will undergo a "face-lift" for the 2017 MY. Here are some of the highlights:

- Aluminum body construction to mimic design of the F-150 pickup truck lineup - resulting in an approximate 350 lbs. weight reduction.
- Exterior cosmetic alterations affecting the grille, bumper, hood, and badging will be seen.
- The wheelbase for all cab-to-axle (CA) configurations will increase by 4". The 4" increase will primarily be seen in the cab itself, presumably providing more leg room and/or seat travel.
- The 108" CA configuration customarily used in conjunction with larger modular bodies (167"-173") will now be 193" vs the previous 189".
- The interior layout will receive such additions as a 4.2" LCD Productivity Screen in the center instrument panel (standard with XLT trim). The up-fitter switches, now numbering (6) instead of the previous (4), will now be located in the cab headliner. The door panel design will also change. This may hamper our ability to provide glove storage in the doors.
- Medium Earth Gray interior color replaces the previous Steel interior color.
- Roll Stability Control (RSC) and AutoLamp are now standard.
- Dual alternators provided with Ambulance Prep Package have increased output (377-amps vs 357-amps previously offered)
- Power Scope mirror option now includes Utility Lighting System (LED side-mirror spotlights)
- OEM sliding rear window option was DELETED.
- F-550 (18,000 lbs. GVWR) is the preferred chassis when spec'ing a large ambulance body due its increased payload capacity.

2017 F-series should be arriving at the ambulance manufacturer's locations by mid-September 2016 (estimated). Customers may see some variations in the warning light, siren speaker, and/or air horn options available for these chassis as the manufacturers of those products respond to the frontal changes made by Ford.

E-series:

This chassis continues essentially "status-quo" for 2017 with no significant changes for the ambulance industry. Originally slated to be discontinued in the 2020 MY, there doesn't appear to be any replacement option currently in the works. This chassis is also widely used in the RV and Shuttle bus industry. All indications are that the current E-series will remain available for quite some time. That should be good news for those customers who may be considering a re-chassis of their current unit.

CHEVROLET/GMC:

General Motors has announced the discontinuation of a diesel engine offering in the G-series Cutaway chassis for the 2017 MY. A 6.0-liter (342 HP) gas engine chassis with an Ambulance Prep Package is available. So far we have not received any requests for this chassis. It has been reported that International will produce GM's Cutaway chassis at their Springfield, OH plant beginning in early 2017.

There are also reports of a GM/International partnership to build Class 4/5 trucks (GVW 14,001-19,500 lbs. GVWR). GM last had a share of this market segment with their C-4500/5500 series chassis offering,

which was discontinued in the fall of 2009. This market is currently dominated by the F-450/550 series chassis and to a much lesser extent the RAM 4500/5500 series chassis. The current GM C-3500 cab/chassis (84" C/A) has a GVWR rating of 13,200 lbs., thereby limiting its use to smaller (145"-150") ambulance bodies.

RAM:

The RAM 4500/5500 chassis remain available for use in the ambulance industry; however, the demand for these chassis is not high as the F-series in our particular sales territories. A gas-powered chassis, carrying the trademark "HEMI" logo, is also available with an Ambulance Prep Package.

MEDIUM-DUTY:

Ironically, all of the medium-duty chassis currently available for use in the ambulance industry (Ford F-650, Freightliner M2, International DuraStar) are now powered by the Cummins ISB (6.7-liter) family of engines as standard. Generally, these engines are spec'd with horsepower ratings ranging from 240-300 HP. Flexibility in spec'ing the chassis to suit one's specific needs remains available; however, Foster Coach has worked with each manufacturer to develop a comprehensive Foster Coach base spec. Most customers are quite comfortable with the content of the base spec, with only an occasional tweak required here or there.

Liquid Spring suspension systems have been developed for each of the current medium-duty chassis offerings. Although we do have medium-duty units on order with Liquid Spring suspensions, we do not have any units currently in operation. We anticipate that these suspensions will be well received, much like they have been on the F-450/550 units.

The International TerraStar (available only with International's M7 V-8 diesel) has been discontinued as a result of International's decision to cease production of the M7 engine. It is suspected that this chassis may be re-introduced with the proposed partnership with GM, presumably with an Isuzu (DuraMax) engine option.

If you have any questions regarding any of the chassis currently available for use in the ambulance industry, please do not hesitate to contact your Foster Coach sales representative. If we don't know the answer, we will certainly reach out to the respective supplier on your behalf.