

The History of Ford's Special Vehicle Team (SVT)



A Look at Ford's High-Performance Vehicle Team

By [Jonathan Lamas](#), About.com Guide

Ask an automotive enthusiast what they think of the letters "SVT" and you'll likely get an answer related to a high-speed performance vehicle. SVT, which stands for Special Vehicle Team, is a division at Ford Motor Company responsible for engineering the company's highest performance cars and trucks.

Ford SVT History

The Ford Special Vehicle Team (SVT) was conceived in 1991, when Ford senior management recognized the corporate advantages of investigating niche vehicle market opportunities. The idea was to assemble passionate driving enthusiasts within Ford and some of its key suppliers into a small, cross-functional group of engineers, product planners and marketing professionals with a common mission: create vehicles to satisfy the desires of knowledgeable, high-performance auto enthusiasts.

SVT was charged to develop and market factory high-performance "halo" vehicles that would add luster to the company's lineup - or "Polish the Ford Oval." To that end, the team focused on creating limited-production cars and trucks with balanced performance attributes -- vehicles that stop as well as they accelerate, ride as well as they handle and, above all, are fun to drive 🚗. All vehicles that wear the SVT badge are designed and developed with four hallmarks in mind: Performance, Substance, Exclusivity and Value

The group, has roots that date back to Ford's Special Vehicle Operations (SVO) division. No doubt, the SVO group helped kick things off with their creation of the popular [SVO Mustang](#), which featured a revolutionary 2.3L turbocharged fuel-injected engine.

The official launch came during the 1992 Chicago Auto Show with the unveiling of the 1993 SVT Mustang Cobra and SVT F-150 Lightning. Ford celebrated SVT's 20th Anniversary at the 2012 Chicago Auto Show by unveiling the [2013 Shelby GT500 convertible](#).

Over the years, seven different SVT vehicles have been produced, including several versions of the Cobra and Shelby GT500, the F-150 Lightning performance pickup and F-150 SVT Raptor, the SVT Contour sports sedan, plus both three- and five-door versions of the SVT Focus. Special SVT Mustang Cobra R models were made in 1993, 1995 and 2000.

Most recently, SVT joined with Team RS in Europe to form the Performance Vehicles Group. Their goal has been to devise a strategy for all future global performance Ford cars. The resulting Focus ST is Ford's first truly global performance car, giving drivers around the world the opportunity to share the exhilarating performance, excellent handling, addictive sound and sporty design Ford's ST badge represents.

"In the past 20 years, SVT has engineered world-class mid-engine supercars, front-wheel-drive performance cars, rear-wheel-drive muscle cars and high-performance on-road and off-road pickup trucks," said Jamal Hameedi, SVT chief engineer. "There is no other performance house in the world that can match that diverse résumé."

The following is a look back at SVT over the years.

1993



Photo Courtesy of Ford Motor Company

The SVT Mustang Cobra and SVT F-150 Lightning go on sale in first quarter of the year. SVT also introduces a late-year 107-unit run of race-tuned Cobra R models.

1994



Photo Courtesy of Ford Motor Company

The Mustang line gets a facelift with the new bodystyle, while the SVT Cobra gains 5 more horsepower from its 5.0-liter V8. In addition to a coupe, SVT offers a 1,000-unit run of red Cobra convertibles as Official Indy Pace Car replicas.

1995



Photo Courtesy of Ford Motor Company

A limited run of 250 second-generation Cobra R models roll off the assembly line with even more punch, thanks to the upfit of a V8 producing 300 horsepower.

1996



Photo Courtesy of Ford Motor Company

SVT Mustang Cobras are for the first time equipped with Ford's 4.6-liter modular V8 engine. The Cobra's 4.6-liter dual overhead cam (DOHC) aluminum V8 produces 305 horsepower. This is the first year for SVT in Canada. . .

1997



Photo Courtesy of Ford Motor Company

SVT reaches the milestone of 50,000 total vehicles sold. Cobra production also reaches an all-time high at 10,049.

1998



Photo Courtesy of Ford Motor Company

The 1998 SVT Contour earns accolades including Los Angeles Car of the Year by The Car Show and Most Wanted by Edmunds.com. Its 2.5-liter V6 engine is awarded a spot on Ward's 10 Best Engines list.

1999



Photo Courtesy of Ford Motor Company

Lightning returns to the market based on Ford's new F-Series platform, packing a new 5.4-liter supercharged Triton V8 producing 360 horsepower and 440 lb.-ft. of torque.

2000



Photo Courtesy of Ford Motor Company

The third-generation Cobra R rolls off the line as "the fastest factory-built Mustang in history." Powered by a unique 385-horsepower, naturally aspirated 5.4-liter V8 and available only in red, just 300 units are built.

2001



Photo Courtesy of Ford Motor Company

The SVT F-150 Lightning receives updated styling and a bump in horsepower, making Lightning the fastest production truck on the planet.

2002



Photo Courtesy of Ford Motor Company

The all-new SVT Focus enters the sport compact market with a unique 170-horsepower DOHC Zetec I-4 engine, six-speed manual gearbox, four-wheel disc brakes and a sport-tuned suspension riding on 17-inch wheels.

2003



Photo Courtesy of Ford Motor Company

The SVT Cobra rocks the enthusiast world with the performance of its Eaton supercharged DOHC 4.6-liter “Terminator” V8.

2004



Photo Courtesy of Ford Motor Company

On the heels of the best-selling Mustang Cobra of all time (SVT produced more than 13,000 Cobras for the 2003 model year), Cobra adds a limited-edition Mystichrome Appearance Package.

2005



Photo Courtesy of Ford Motor Company

The 2005 Ford GT was a supercar conceived to mark Ford Motor Company’s Centennial. Each Ford GT was powered by a hand-built aluminum 5.4-liter DOHC supercharged V8 producing 550 horsepower and 500 lb.-ft. of torque.

2006



Photo Courtesy of Ford Motor Company

New for 2006, the Ford GT ‘Heritage’ paint harkens back to the Le Mans-winning Ford GT racer. This paint scheme features a Heritage Blue with Epic Orange-striped exterior and four white ‘roundels’ allowing customers to apply any number.

2007



Photo Courtesy of Ford Motor Company

After 40 years, racing legend Carroll Shelby and Ford Mustang join forces with the introduction of the 2007 Ford Shelby GT500. A modern interpretation of the Shelby Mustang of the 1960s, the Ford Shelby GT500 used advanced engineering to attain the performance that made the original GT500 so special.

2008



Photo Courtesy of Ford Motor Company

The 2008 Ford Shelby GT500KR, “King of the Road,” was the most powerful production Mustang ever produced, thanks to a 540 horsepower supercharged 5.4-liter V8 with 510 lb.-ft. of torque. It was offered in a limited edition of 1,000 units for 2008.

2009

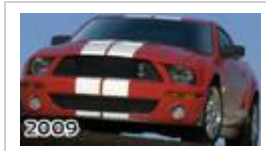


Photo Courtesy of Ford Motor Company

In production for a third year, the Shelby GT500 delivers 500 horsepower from its supercharged 5.4-liter V8.

2010



Photo Courtesy of Ford Motor Company

In 2010 SVT produces the ultimate off-road performance truck – the F-150 SVT Raptor. 2010 F-150 SVT Raptor sales exceed the highest model year sales of the F-150 SVT Lightning.

2011



Photo Courtesy of Ford Motor Company

The 2011 Shelby GT500 is powered by an all-new aluminum-block 5.4-liter supercharged V8 engine, which produces 550 horsepower and 510 lb.-ft. of torque, a 10 horsepower increase versus the 2010 model.

2012



Photo Courtesy of Ford Motor Company

The latest F-150 SVT Raptor delivers a new level of off-road performance with a Torsen front differential and class-exclusive front camera system. The standard 6.2-liter V8 engine delivers 411 horsepower and 434 lb.-ft. of torque. .

2013



Ford Mustang Shelby GT500: First Ford built 200-mph + pony car.

There are few road-legal instruments as capable as the [2013 Ford Mustang Shelby GT500](#) of rearranging your internal anatomy. But this is one procedure you don't want to be anesthetized for. Frankly, it wouldn't matter if you were. If this powertrain isn't capable of waking you up, don't worry: You're already dead. 662 horsepower and 631 foot pounds of torque for the most powerful production motor in the world.