

## Press Release

Jun 02, 2005 | ID: 2704

# The Volvo brand name turns 90

### Background

It has been rolling for 90 years and keeps on going; the name Volvo first appeared on a ball-bearing nine decades ago this June. The name was officially registered on June 22, 1915 - after a slight administrative mishap - and stamped onto the side of the outer race of a new automotive ball- and roller-bearing manufactured by Göteborg, Sweden-based Svenska Kullagerfabriken's (SKF).

In 1914, SKF realised the enormous potential the automotive business offered to a manufacturer of bearings. Eager to capitalize on the opportunity, SKF set-up a subsidiary to supply the emerging industry. SKF was already a world-leading developer and manufacturer of industrial bearings thanks to the unique invention of founder Sven Wingquist: the spherical bearing.

### **Volvo – simple, smart and easy to pronounce**

On February 20, 1915, SKF patent engineer Evald Delmar sent the application documents to register the name VOLVO (in capital letters) – through the AB Delmar & Co Patent Office in Stockholm – to the Royal Swedish Patent and Registration Office.

Volvere is the infinitive form of the verb roll in Latin. Conjugate volvere to its first-person singular form, it becomes volvo or "I roll" in English.

The name was simple, ingenious and with a very strong symbolic connection to SKF's entire operation. Furthermore, it was easy to pronounce in most places around the world and carried minimal risk for spelling errors. SKF was operating as a large export company in the early 20th century and recognized the value of a good international brand name.

### **Everything that rolls**

In the brand name application, SKF wanted to obtain the greatest possible freedom of use of the term Volvo. The application stated Volvo would be used on a wide range of different products: "Ball bearings, roller bearings, machines, transmissions, automobiles, bicycles, railway material, transportation devices, means of transport of all kinds and parts of and accessories for the aforementioned products."

Some items already existed in SKF's product offerings, others would appear later and some were never produced at all. Aside from the now-familiar Volvo vehicles, other products that also carried the Volvo brand name were such oddities as gas burners, camping trailers and office chairs.

### **Full speed ahead – after five years of rest**

Shortly after the start of the Volvo ball bearing operations, the industry came to an abrupt halt with the on-set of World War I. Potential bearing customers had to stop manufacturing cars and begin heavy vehicle production and other war materiel. After five years of operation, the Aktiebolaget

Volvo subsidiary was discontinued in 1920. SKF had decided to market all products under one name in the future: its own.

The AB Volvo brand was put away in a desk drawer until August, 1926, when the SKF board, after a long campaign of persuasion, eventually agreed to financially support a new car manufacturing operation. The idea of starting up a new kind of automobile manufacturing company had been the brainchild of one very headstrong SKF employee -- Assar Gabriellsson.

Working together with fellow engineer Gustaf Larson, Gabriellsson promoted the idea of building a uniquely Swedish car. SKF finally gave the go-ahead, provided start-up funding and produced - from a desk drawer - the company documents for AB Volvo. The legal name of the company was also chosen as the name for the cars that would be produced.

### **Ancient logotype**

At the same time as AB Volvo was re-emerging, the ancient chemical symbol for iron, a circle with an arrow pointing diagonally upwards to the right, was adopted by the scientific community. Because it also symbolised the Roman god of warfare, Mars, an early relationship was established between the Mars symbol and the metal of which most weapons were made at the time, iron.

As such, the ideogram has long been the symbol of the iron industry. The iron badge on the first Volvo vehicle was designed to build on the industry symbolism of steel and strength, and create associations with the honoured traditions of the Swedish iron industry. The first Volvo vehicle, appearing in April of 1927, also had Volvo written in its own typeface within the logo.

The logotype was complemented with a diagonal band running across the radiator, from top right to lower left. The band was originally a technical necessity to keep the chrome badge in place, but it gradually developed into being a more of a decorative symbol. It is still found across the grille of Volvo vehicles today.

### **I am still rolling**

In 1999, the Volvo Car Corporation was sold by AB Volvo to Ford Motor Company. One reservation was stipulated, however: the brand name should be used by both Volvo Car Corporation and the rest of the companies in the Volvo Group.

The brand name was consequently put into a holding company, Volvo Trademark Holding AB, and is equally owned by AB Volvo and Ford. The management team by both companies decide how the name can be used and in what context. Currently, the holding company's management group consists of Leif Johansson, President and CEO of AB Volvo, and Bill Ford Jr, Chairman and CEO of Ford Motor Company.

To date, some 13.5 million Volvo cars have been produced as well as millions of trucks, buses, marine, aero and industrial engines and construction equipment. Of all the Volvo cars manufactured to date, approximately eight million are still rolling today.

Little did patent engineer Evald Delmar realise, when he signed the application documents in his capacity as SKF representative, that he was about to play an important part in creating a brand that was to become well-known and well-respected around the world 90 years later.

In Canada, Volvo automobiles are sold by Volvo Cars of Canada Ltd., part of the Volvo Car Corporation of Göteborg, Sweden. The company provides marketing, sales, parts, service, technology and training support to the 43 Volvo automobile retailers across the country. The company's product range includes the flagship S80 luxury sedan, the versatile V70 wagon, the S60 sports sedan, and an XC-line of vehicles that includes the rugged XC70 and the award-winning XC90 sport utility vehicle. For 2005, the company is introducing the completely redesigned S40 sports sedan and V50 sportswagon, providing performance for a new generation.

- 30 -

**Contact:**  
Doug Mephram

1-877-975-1572 office  
613-922-6097 mobile  
doug.mepham@bellnet.ca

Chad Heard  
416-540-4229  
chadheard@rogers.com

**Media Web site:**  
<http://www.volvocars-pr.ca>

Descriptions and facts in this press material relate to Volvo Cars's international car range. Described features might be optional. Vehicle specifications may vary from one country to another and may be altered without prior notification.

## Related Images



[More Images >](#)

[media.volvocars.com >](http://media.volvocars.com)

[volvocars.com >](http://volvocars.com)

Copyright © 2025 Volvo Car Corporation (or its affiliates or licensors).