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Local spotlight

Group backs aerospace work

Association president says state manufacturers could gain up to \$560M a year in avionic sales.

NEAL HALDANE
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Michigan manufacturers could capture \$270 million to \$560 million a year in sales by producing products for the aerospace industry.

That's the prediction of Gavin Brown, president of the Michigan Aerospace Manufacturers Association, which formed earlier this year to propel sales of avionic parts from companies in the state.

"The equipment need for aerospace is very similar to automotive," Brown said. "Why not take the idle capacity and put it into production for aerospace where there is a greater need and capacity shortage?" So far, the association has enrolled 17 companies from across the state including Progressive Stamping in Royal Oak and HydroDynamics Technologies in Pontiac.

"We are thrilled with the opportunity to leverage our equipment and production capabilities to manufacture parts for aerospace and military applications," said Kevin Webb, HDT vice president.

The association helps firms bid for work in the aerospace industry, which has seen the number of suppliers drop after 9/11 even though demand for civilian, military and corporate aircraft has risen, Brown said.

U.S. aerospace deliveries surpassed \$184 billion in 2006 and sales are expected to reach \$195 billion this year, according to the Aerospace Industries Association. Increased demand for civil aircraft, engines, and related parts and components will fuel the growth.

With reduced demand for automotive parts, Brown said Michigan



Gavin Brown, left, president of the Michigan Aerospace Manufacturers Association, talks with Doug Shantz, general manager of Progressive Stamping in Royal Oak, an association member. So far, firms in the group have bid on 4,000 products and Brown expects these initial efforts to pay off in the next few months as members start signing contracts. "The compelling reason to put this whole thing together is to take the expertise and knowledge we have in Michigan and put it to work in aerospace," Brown says.

(David Guralnick / Detroit News)

companies can keep factories open and diversify their customer base by adding aerospace production.

"The compelling reason to put this whole thing together is to take the expertise and knowledge we have in Michigan and put it to work in aerospace," Brown said. "It's a cultural shift in that automotive may say 'I need 20 million parts' while aero-

space needs 1 million or half-a-million." The association also acts as a liaison between Michigan companies and original equipment manufacturers and suppliers in the aerospace industry, which is concentrated in California.

"I had to convince OEMs and distributors that the folks in Michigan have the quality and expertise and

Michigan Aerospace Manufacturers Association

- Founded: 2007
- Headquarters: Ada
- Members: 17
- Information: www.michman.org

could produce the exact piece they are looking for," Brown said.

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The Michigan Aerospace Manufacturers Association continues to seek members but remains highly selective about its roster, Brown said.

"I want to make sure the companies that are joining fit our model and have a shared vision of what it takes," he said. "If they don't have the capacity and capabilities we are looking for, it's not going to be a benefit to anyone."

With that in mind, Brown expects the association will top out at 36 members with no more than three companies per discipline, such as stampers, plastic injection molding, tool and die.

"I want them to get business," Brown said. "We're all about sales."

Neal Haldane is a Metro Detroit freelance writer.