

High-tech's ties to cars may hurt

AP — The heavy reliance by advanced manufacturing technology in Michigan on the auto industry may cloud the technology's future, according to a study released Friday.

The state Department of Commerce study showed 325 companies in the state are involved in high-technology generating \$4.4 billion in sales each year. About 33,000 people are employed by the companies.

However, 82 percent of those companies are located in "Automation Alley," an area that runs through Oakland, Macomb and Washtenaw counties.

The study questioned whether non-automotive markets for advanced manufacturing firms can be developed.

"This is a matter of great moment for Michigan," the study said, "particularly if, as some have stated, the massive 1980-87 wave of investment in upgrading automotive manufacturing facilities is giving way to a long period of reduced capital commitments."

The study said some of the companies have seen a sharp drop in employment and flattening sales since the Big Three automakers began cutting orders 18 months ago.

DESPITE THE caution expressed in some of the report, Commerce director Doug Ross praised the success of the new technology as "a major part of Michigan's diversification strategy."

"The future of America's industrial competitiveness will depend heavily on the success of these 'Automation Alley' companies," Ross said.

The report was produced by the Industrial Technology Institute in Ann Arbor, and is the first to provide numbers on the size and composition of "Automation Alley."

It considered companies in four types of technology — robotics and machine tools, machine vision and computer-based inspection, computer-based control systems and design technologies.

The study also said: — The average age of companies in "Automation Alley" is 23.6 years, and 17 percent were founded after 1981.

— The average age of robotics companies is 29.6 years.

— Average annual sales of all types of advanced manufacturing companies is \$19.5 million.

Three-quarters of the companies are family-owned.

Hills-based Medar wins Ross' praise

Continued from Page 1

a press conference Oct. 2, said that Medar and 324 other companies in southeast Michigan are quickly outpacing the high-tech growth of California's Silicon Valley.

KNOWN AS Automation Alley, companies employing 33,000 workers exist in a corridor stretching through Wayne, Oakland, Macomb and Washtenaw counties.

Ross called this area, which includes Medar, a "key part" in developing what was once almost exclusively auto-related into a more diversified high-tech sector serving more than just auto companies.

"Now, more than 40 percent of our customers are not auto-related but companies that use computers and guidance systems," Ross said.

The unveiling of the study was held at Medar's headquarters at 38700 Grand River to show how the company's technological advancements are used in a manufacturing setting, Ross explained.

"What you see here is a company that reflects trends going on in the industry," he said, adding that Medar is increasing Michigan's ability to compete globally with foreign markets.

Medar, which experienced a 50 percent growth rate since 1982, employs 250 workers at its Farmington Hills and Howell offices.

In addition to servicing auto-related companies, it also designs automated systems for the aerospace and pharmaceutical industries and exports many of its products overseas.

THE KEY to success stories like that found in Medar and others in "automation alley" is diversification, Ross stressed. Not only will it accelerate "tremendous growth" but will allow companies to integrate new technologies.

"This is our strength — new machine tools," Ross said. "Companies like Medar are eager to find new markets. You cannot win the long run by making things in America if you rely on old technology. If you do, you'll pay more for it than in Japan or in other foreign markets."

Charles Drake, Medar president and board chairman, agreed that companies must diversify to successfully compete with other markets.

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				1	2	3
4	5	6	7 "BODY SCULPTURING" Dr. Ned Winkelman 7-9 p.m.	8	9	10 SAVE YOUR LIFE Cholesterol Testing Walk-in 11 a.m. - 2 p.m.
11 CPR TRAINING Reservations Needed 12-4 p.m.	12 SAVE YOUR LIFE Cholesterol Testing Walk-in 5-9 p.m.	13	14 "EXERCISE & WOMEN'S HEALTH" Dr. E. J. Kazara 7-9 p.m.	15	16	17
18 CPR TRAINING Reservations Needed 12-4 p.m.	19 "BACK SENSE" Susan Marcus, B.S. Bring your stiff neck and sore back! 7 p.m.	20 "YOU ARE WHAT YOU EAT" Vicki Kosterhouse, M.A. 7-9 p.m.	21	22	ANNIVERSARY WEEKEND 2nd ANNUAL TENNIS BONANZA Games, Prizes 7-11 p.m. Wallyball Clinic Challenge 8-11	
25 LEN KRAVITZ, M.A. Aerobics Class 9 a.m. Instructor Workshop 10:30-3:30 p.m. United Space Available	26	27 "THE SANDWICH GENERATION" a look at aging Barbara Upkowitz 7-9 p.m.	28	29	30	31 LAST DAY FOR OCTOBER MEMBERSHIP SPECIALS!

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