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Coatings Seminar May 3

The 37th annual FOCUS (Future of Coatings Under Study) seminar will be held Thursday, May 3 at the MSU Education Center in Troy.

This conference is sponsored by the Detroit Society of Coatings Technology.

The subject matter for the event is "Back to Basics - Into the Future."

It will highlight past, present and future technologies for the painting of automotive bodies and components.

The event is geared to everybody involved in auto coatings, from a seasoned coatings chemist to a new paint engineer.

For more details on the May 3 FOCUS event, contact Jim Jakubowski at jim.jakubowski@bayer.com.

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Faurecia North America Revels In 33 Pct. Growth

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is enjoying almost 33 percent growth.

Faurecia's North American operations account for 25 percent of the parent's sales, due to the rapid expansion of the past three years.

In North America, Faurecia has 35 production sites, 5 technical centers and one customer center.

Faurecia's Michigan footprint is as follows:

- Auburn Hills (two technical centers including NA HQ);
- Fraser (two manufacturing facilities);
- Sterling Heights (two manufacturing facilities);
- Lansing (one manufacturing facility);

- Holland (one technical center);
- Taylor (one manufacturing center);
- Troy (one technical center).

Faurecia's North American growth is reflected in robust growth of contracts with Big Three manufacturers.

For the Ford Fiesta, Faurecia in North America supplies the full line exhaust, instrument panel, door panels and the center console.

For the Cadillac CTS, Faurecia in North America supplies the hot and cold end in the exhaust system, the seat frames / tracks / recliners, and the door panels.

For the Chevy Volt, Faurecia supplies the seat tracks and other mechanisms.

Also, when Chrysler needed a refresh on the interior of Chrysler 200 passenger car, the automaker's engineers worked with Faurecia's at the Executive Hills Drive complex on a 14-month crash program to develop the smart and professional looking new interior seen on showroom floors today.

"We build where are customers are, which makes sense and that's what we've done - we're in every carmaker other than Honda right now," Heneka said.

"We're expanding all around. We're the 9th largest in North America and we're working our way to be 5th largest. We have 75,000 employees globally."

"In the U.S. we have 15,000 employees and a little over 2,000 in Michigan alone."

"It's kind of our roots - there's an engineering base here, the universities are here, Nissan, Hyundai and Toyota all have technical centers here in addition to Chrysler, Ford and General Motors. So this is probably the place to be for us, that's what we think."

Faurecia came out of the 2008-2009 downturn fairly well, as global suppliers go.

"Based on the downturn here, we were fortunate that

in North America, we weren't sitting on any open capacity, a lot of the historic suppliers maybe added too much capacity... they were running at less than capacity, which makes it difficult to maintain your margins. We didn't have that situation, so it didn't hurt us that much," he said.

"Europe struggles a little more, even today - the growth in Europe will probably be flat this year. We think it will be double-digit growth in North America."

"We were up 33 percent over last year in our first quarter, so we're doing very well right here."

"And car sales are doing well, we can't take credit for the cars selling better, but the economy, from our perspective, is fairly good."

"We laid some people off during the down times but then we brought them back. We hired between 650 and 700 people last year in Michigan alone, we're still in a growth phase: so far, so good."

City Employees Test Drive, Evaluate Chrysler PHEV Minivans in Auburn Hills

AUBURN HILLS - The City of Auburn Hills took delivery last week of four Plug-In Hybrid Electric Vehicle (PHEV) Chrysler Town & Country minivans from Chrysler Group LLC as part of a two-year demonstration project that is a partnership between Chrysler Group and the U.S. Department of Energy.

Chrysler is investing \$15.8 million into the project and the U.S. Department of Energy is contributing \$10 million.

Only 25 test vehicles will be created, according to Abdullah A. Bazzi, senior manager of Electrified Power Train Programs for Chrysler Group.

"This Town & Country minivan is the only minivan to boast a plug-in hybrid powertrain in combination with flex fuel capability," says Bazzi.

"We're pleased to have four of these 25 vehicles being tested right here in Chrysler's backyard where they can get real-world use and be evaluated promptly."

Auburn Hills will use the Chrysler-owned vehicles for testing purposes to evaluate everyday city and highway driving.

Staff selected to evaluate the vehicles will regularly report all driving and charging experiences back to Chrysler.

City Manager Pete Auger said, "Chrysler has been an outstanding corporate citizen

of Auburn Hills and we are privileged to be participating in the evaluation of these vehicles."

As part of the program, each vehicle will receive one Level II EVSE charging station, which will be installed at the Civic Center Campus on North Squirrel and the Auburn Hills Department of Public Services Building on Brown Road. Installation costs for the charging stations will be borne by the city and will remain at the city following project completion.

The agreement between Chrysler Group and the city anticipates approximately 16,800 miles will be driven on each demonstration vehicle.

Routine maintenance such as oil changes will be the responsibility of the city. Chrysler will be responsible for any repairs that may be required as part of the testing process.

Auger noted that employees assigned the vehicles have been recognized for their outstanding work efforts.

"When you see these specially marked Chrysler minivans on the road, you can be assured that they are being driven by City of Auburn Hills employees who have demonstrated outstanding commitment to their jobs, the residents and the entire Auburn Hills community," he said.

In July 2011, Auburn Hills became the first municipality in Michigan to adopt an electric vehicle infrastructure ordinance to facilitate the installation of electric vehicle charging stations.

The ordinance sets the stage for the city to become a leader in incorporating electric vehicles into its community and economic development plans.

In October 2011, Chrysler Group LLC delivered four PHEV Ram 1500 pickup trucks to the City of Auburn Hills as part of a national, three-year demonstration program for evaluation and testing of the trucks by the city's Community Development, Police and Public Services Departments.

Fiat Troubles Loom in Italy As Transport Strike Extends

By COLLEEN BARRY
AP Business Writer

MILAN (AP) - A transport strike in Italy has forced automaker Fiat SpA to cut production, prompting the automaker to warn last week that it may have to close some plants temporarily.

The nearly month-old strike by heavy-transport drivers against government austerity measures has forced the carmaker to produce 20,000 fewer cars, creating "a strong impact on billing and auto registration in Italy and abroad," Fiat said in a statement.

"It will be very difficult to make that up in the course of the year," the Fiat statement said.

Heavy-transport drivers, including those who move the multi-decked trailers that transport cars, have been striking against government measures that have increased the price of fuel. As a result, freshly produced cars are backing up at factories where they are produced.

Fiat forecast a 10 percent impact on market share for March if drivers don't resume work in the coming days.

The strike and production cuts come at a moment when European automakers are struggling to make money against shrinking demand and region-wide overcapacity.

Among the plants Fiat said is at risk for temporary closure is Pomigliano, where Fiat recently started production of the top-selling new Panda after signing a hard-won contract with unions for more flexible labor rules.

Fiat chief executive Sergio Marchionne moved production of the Panda from Poland to Italy as part of a plan to boost production in Italy. Marchionne has complained about plant overcapacity in Europe stalling efficiency.

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