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Michigan shifting to 'advanced' production

Report: Modernized facilities now employ 10.3% of work force

BARBARA WIELAND • BWIELAND@LSJ.COM • AUGUST 4, 2010 • FROM LANSING STATE JOURNAL

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Michigan's manufacturing sector is evolving from dingy, inefficient workspaces dedicated to the [auto](#) industry into modernized, high-productivity manufacturing plants that produce cars, high-tech products such as pharmaceuticals, robotics and electronic equipment.

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BY THE NUMBERS
381,351

number of advanced manufacturing workers in Michigan, based on 2007 data

10.3%

percentage of state's work force made up of advanced manufacturing jobs

\$64,122

average advanced manufacturing worker's wage in Michigan

10.4%

drop in advanced manufacturing jobs from 2007 to second quarter of 2009

22.7%

drop in jobs in manufacturing sector overall from 2007 to second quarter of 2009

Source: University Research Corridor report, state of Michigan

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That's the conclusion of a new study released by the University Research Corridor, made up of [Michigan State University](#), the University of Michigan and Wayne State University. It was prepared by Andersen Economic Group in East Lansing.

These "advanced manufacturing" plants now employ 381,351 at 11,000 businesses in Michigan, the University Research Corridor's Support for Advanced Manufacturing in Michigan report said. URC is a joint effort of the three universities and has its main office in the Stadium District Building on Michigan Avenue in [Lansing](#).

In 2007, the most recent year for which data were available from the U.S. Census Bureau, these workers accounted for 10.3 percent of the state's total work force. They had an average annual wage in 2007 of \$64,122 - 56.6 percent greater than the state's annual average wage of \$40,935.

Later data from the state of Michigan show the recession has taken its toll on advanced manufacturing jobs in the state, however. Between 2007 and the second quarter of last year, the number of jobs in the advanced products and processes component of advanced manufacturing fell by 10.4 percent.

That compared with a jobs decline of 22.7 percent in Michigan's overall manufacturing sector over the same time period, however.

"Yes, there are these declines, but advanced manufacturing has seen less of it," said Caroline Sallee, an Anderson Economic Group consultant and the report's author.

There also have been wage gains in advanced manufacturing, while pay for many other sectors is trading water or declining, once inflation is factored in.

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The report listed two Lansing-area businesses, Niowave Inc. and Draths Corp., as examples of successful advanced manufacturing companies.

Niowave, based in Lansing, manufactures superconducting particle accelerators and components that are used by government and private enterprises in the defense, medical, energy and other sectors.

Niowave plans to add 100 employees to its existing 50 workers in the next two years. Founder Terry Grimm said earlier this year that the company expects revenue this year of \$10 million.

Niowave Chief Operating Officer Jerry Hollister said mid-Michigan has the opportunity to become a center of excellence for manufacturers of high-tech equipment just as California's Silicon Valley became a center for computer-related [research and development](#).

"There's no equivalent of Silicon Valley for what we're doing," Hollister said. "We could build that here. We have the opportunity in mid-Michigan to become that."

Draths, which is moving from Okemos to Delhi Township, also could become a leader in an advanced manufacturing base in mid-Michigan. Draths is developing ways to manufacture materials normally made with petroleum, such as nylon and plastic, with renewable sources such as plants. The company has 26 employees and expects to have 40 to 50 by June 2011 and 200 by 2014.



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