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Chrysler Group LLC's Brampton (Canada) Assembly Plant Prepares to Launch the All-new 2011 Dodge Charger

- Implementation of World Class Manufacturing (WCM) revitalizes the 24-year-old facility
- More than 2,500 employees trained on WCM principles and launch readiness
- Quality Teams drive improvements in 2011 model
- Plant introduces new processes and technologies to enhance vehicle quality

November 14, 2010, Auburn Hills, Mich. - In preparation for the launch of the all-new 2011 Dodge Charger, employees at Chrysler Group LLC's Brampton Assembly Plant, located outside of Toronto, began transforming the facility as part of World Class Manufacturing (WCM), an extensive and thorough process to restore all facilities to their original and maximum functionality.

While changes to the nearly 3 million square-foot assembly plant can be seen throughout the facility - from the new landscaping in the front of the building to the addition of a new Metrology Center - the real transformation occurred inside the plant on the shop floor.

"WCM has transformed the way we run the business and given us a defined route map to follow," said Kevin Hayes, Plant Manager - Brampton Assembly Plant. "The employees here are committed to the implementation of WCM."

WORLD CLASS MANUFACTURING (WCM) TAKES HOLD

WCM was introduced in July 2009, shortly after Chrysler Group LLC emerged from bankruptcy. While Chrysler Group implemented manufacturing programs in the past, what makes WCM different is that it fully engages people in eliminating waste and empowers them to take ownership of the process.

For the Brampton plant, the first step in ensuring the success of WCM meant putting everyone - plant staff, CAW officials, business unit leaders and team leaders - through training. Employees participated in more than 30,000 hours of training focused on principles of WCM, as well as on specific skill classes that could immediately help identify and attack waste and losses on the line.

"When we started up after bankruptcy, it was important that WCM was integrated into all of our processes from the beginning," said Hayes. "Through training, we explained WCM and showed the employees how their involvement would be critical to its success and the future success of the company."

WCM TRANSFORMS BRAMPTON

With the implementation of WCM, many improvements have been made to the Brampton plant, including high-efficiency lighting, upgraded cafeteria, remodeled bathrooms and freshly painted colorful walls. These facility improvements have increased the morale of the more than 2,500 employees working on two shifts and given them a new sense of purpose. As a result, employees felt empowered to offer more than 5,000 suggestions on other improvements that could be made throughout the plant.

"It is impressive and convincing to see a company come out of bankruptcy and invest in things that may seem small, but really have an impact on the employees and the quality of their work," said a chassis team leader.

"These suggestions are key in continuously improving the quality of our new products," said Hayes. "Who knows the vehicles better than the people who build them."

LAUNCHING THE BEST PRODUCT EVER

For the Brampton plant, the launch of the all-new 2011 Dodge Charger has to be world class.

"My focus for this launch is quality," said Hayes. "Our management team and I won't accept anything short of excellence. Plus, our customers demand it."

With this focus, the development of Q-Teams - or Quality Teams - was developed. Q-teams consist of experts focused on the critical components of the product and process.

There are 21 Q-Teams in operation. Each team has been tasked with exceeding the current 2010 Charger in all aspects of performance. Not only will the new Charger be more efficient and technologically advanced, the level of craftsmanship that drives fit and finish will be truly world class.

"The primary function of the Q-Teams is to develop internal quality gates in the system to validate product quality and root cause issues and implement corrective actions," said Hayes. "This approach was used at Jefferson North for the launch of the 2011 Jeep Grand Cherokee and was a success. We expect the same, if not better, results in Brampton." Another tool brought to Brampton to further improve quality is a new Metrology Center. Used throughout the Fiat system, the \$20 million, 35,000-square-foot facility reflects the company's heightened dedication to quality. Brampton joins the Jefferson North Assembly Plant as one of the first Chrysler Group facilities and one of only a few Canadian automotive manufacturing facilities to utilize such technology.

The Metrology Center employs more than 30 people, who are responsible for measurement and validation of the body geometry. The tools within the Metrology Center are used to verify the capability of the vehicle's entire sheet metal structure to the smallest of tolerances, as small as a human hair. The aim is to identify possible deviations between the product and the process.

"We have state of the art inspection equipment, including a Meisterbock gauge and white light laser scanners that allow us to measure and certify both plant processes and incoming supplier parts," said Alex Gaponov, Quality Manager - Brampton Assembly Plant.

But even with all of the latest technology available to address quality issues, one of the most important parts of ensuring a high-quality production process was involving employees from the line in the new product launch early in the pilot phase. The team participated in virtual simulation builds and was able to help finesse product design to make it manufacturing friendly and robust.

"Having the team leaders and team members involved in the early stages of launch gave us a huge advantage," said Gaponov. "It allowed us to tweak parts and processes for easy production, thereby improving quality along the way."

TRIM LINE TRANSFORMATION

Two of the critical principles of WCM are Workplace Organization and Logistics. By addressing these issues, line operators can work more efficiently.

"The key for improving efficiency on the line is delivering parts to the operator in his or her golden zone, the work position that is most comfortable and requires minimal extra movement," said Hayes.

The Trim 1 Line, the part of the assembly line where the body wire harness, battery, sunroof, and heating, ventilation and air-conditioning unit are installed, was one area that required a major transformation.

Using WCM guidelines, employees first analyzed all of the parts used on the Trim 1 Line to determine which ones could be combined into kits. Once the analysis was complete, the parts were segregated into unique kits and delivered to the operators in the golden zone.

"When you can kit parts and deliver them to the operator in his or her golden zone, it improves quality in two ways," said Hayes. "One, it reduces the chance of operator error by selecting the wrong part and two, the operator has more time to work on the car rather than walking to retrieve the parts."

With this change to the trim line, the plant expects to see about a 20 percent improvement in overall first time build

quality, thus reducing subsequent repairs.

"The lessons we learned in Trim 1 will allow us to implement a similar process in the rest of the plant more efficiently and effectively," said Tony Hill, Assembly Center Manager and Workplace Organization Pillar Lead - Brampton Assembly Plant.

But the transformation doesn't stop there. The plan is to kit parts for all of the final-assembly line and drastically reduce the number of forklifts by 2012. With the drastic reduction of forklifts, materials will be delivered to the line via train-like tuggers in smaller containers, improving the efficiency of the material delivery system and making Brampton a much safer place to work.

LASER BRAZE ROOF JOINT PROCESS

One of the most innovative strategies for the 2011 Dodge Charger vehicle design is a new roof laser braze process, which allows for a seamless transition from the roof to the door opening. A technology already used by Fiat, Brampton Assembly invested nearly \$12 million to be the first Chrysler plant to install this new technology.

The laser braze process uses an intense laser-light beam to melt a piece of silicon wire, applied by four robots, into a predetermined location between the aperture and roof panel. This fully automated technology will give the new Charger the best-in-class sculptural appearance of many luxury vehicles, while improving customer quality and achieving optimal process cost reductions.

"We are excited to be the first Chrysler plant to utilize this process, and we feel our customers will appreciate a cleaner more defined appearance on their vehicle, thus enhancing the vehicle's perceived quality," said Hayes.

ABOUT THE BRAMPTON ASSEMBLY PLANT

The Brampton Assembly Plant sits on 269 acres in Brampton, Ontario, Canada, about 1.5 hours north of the world famous Niagara Falls. The building is approximately 3 million square feet and has its own stamping facility. The plant has nearly 33 miles of conveyors, more than 600 robots, 80 receiving docks and has the capacity to build more than 1,500 vehicles daily. More than 2,700 people work on two shifts at the Brampton plant, with more than 2,500 being represented by Local CAW 1285.

The facility was built in 1986 and acquired by Chrysler with the purchase of AMC in August 1987. The plant began production of the LH vehicles - the Dodge Intrepid, Eagle Vision and Chrysler Concorde - in June 1992. Production of a new Chrysler Concorde and Dodge Intrepid began in September 1997, followed by the Chrysler LHS and 300M in April 1998. Production of the award-winning Chrysler 300 launched in January 2004, with the Dodge Magnum following in February. Production of the Dodge Charger was launched in early 2005. The modern American muscle car, the Dodge Challenger with the 5.7-liter HEMI engine, was introduced in 2008.

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