

Factory doors open virtually for Manufacturing Day

Written by By Holly Bradshaw-Eakes Sandy Nelson Finance New Mexico project
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When students from University High and Early College High schools toured Roswell manufacturer AerSale in Oct. 2019, it was the first time many of them had seen an Airbus jetliner, let alone boarded an aircraft.

Students viewed the jet's cockpit, talked with maintenance professionals and learned about careers in the aviation industry, including high-paying jobs then available at AerSale, which specializes in the sale, lease and exchange of used aircraft, engines and components and offers a broad range of engineering services to commercial aircraft companies.

The students' visit was part of Manufacturing Day, a month-long national effort to introduce teenagers and young adults to careers in manufacturing.

The annual event continues this October, but without the in-person facility tours that have historically been the heart of Manufacturing Day activities. Because the ongoing coronavirus pandemic makes such large-group activities risky, involvement this year will be virtual — through the social distance of cyberspace.

Participating New Mexico manufacturers have created short, informative videos that focus on the skills and aptitudes required in modern manufacturing and dispel the misconception that

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manufacturing involves repetitive, unskilled tasks performed in dark, dingy factories. These videos will be released throughout the month on a variety of youth-friendly web-based platforms, including Facebook and YouTube.

Manufacturing Day events aim to excite young people about engineering, design and production jobs carried out in exciting and innovative environments.

These jobs will be an integral part of COVID-19 economic recovery efforts, including in rural areas, according to organizations such as Forward Cities and the Urban Manufacturing Alliance. These groups are advocating place-based strategies that include converting commercial properties to multitenant manufacturing centers, maker spaces that activate youth pipelines for business development, and community-embedded workforce development programs.

One barrier to manufacturing growth is awareness, according to Erica Staley of the Manufacturing Renaissance of Chicago.

Organizers of Manufacturing Day 2020 in New Mexico believe they can clear that hurdle this year with video outreach and expose even more people to manufacturing than they could through limited-space facility tours.

Statewide events are sponsored by New Mexico Manufacturing Extension Partnership, a nonprofit organization that offers manufacturers training and expertise in efficient production and administrative practices that allow them to transform their operations and maximize their competitive edge. This is the eighth year New Mexico MEP has sponsored the initiative.

Last year, 25 companies in 13 New Mexico communities hosted tours, and 13 proclamations were issued by mayors and the governor. Legislators and other decision makers joined the activities, and students saw designs turned into products and products repurposed into other products.

Video events are hosted at <http://newmexicomep.org/mfgday>, where each company has its own page. A link to available jobs will be provided if the company has openings.

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Participation is open to all manufacturers in New Mexico, including food and beverage producers, manufacturers of solar and medical devices, and craft artisans. Manufacturers interested in participating can send an email to mfgday@newmexicomep.org. New Mexico MEP will send tips and guidelines, along with a participation invitation, to the company.

The Finance New Mexico project connects individuals and businesses with skills and funding resources for their business or idea. To learn more, go to www.FinanceNewMexico.org

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