

Indiana: Growth Industries Help Power State Through Recession-Related Challenges

Cynthia Kincaid (June/July 09)

There's something in the wind in Indiana - alternative energy investment. The Indiana Office of Energy Development (OED) is actively recruiting new, high-tech companies to the state, underscoring a serious commitment to wind energy development and components manufacturing. "We've just started tapping into Indiana's wind resource," says Brandon Seitz, OED's director. "Indiana's location and manufacturing infrastructure also makes it perfect to help meet this industry's growing supply chain needs."

In its Wind Power Outlook 2009 report, the American Wind Energy Association spotlighted Indiana as the fastest-growing state for wind energy installations in 2008 and projected an increase in installations to more than 800 megawatts by the end of this year. "Indiana has risen quickly as a national leader in wind energy development and is a natural location for future investment from the growing industry," says Mitch Roob, secretary of commerce and CEO of the Indiana Economic Development Corporation.

Indiana has been nicknamed the "Crossroads of America," because it has more intersecting interstate highways than any other state, along with three international airports, a robust rail system, and three marine ports on Lake Michigan and the Ohio River. At the same time, the state has invested heavily in information technology infrastructure, and its fiber optic network is among the best in the nation.

Sonco Worldwide, a manufacturer of chain-link and vinyl fencing and barricades has decided to take advantage of Indiana's strategic location and establish a manufacturing operation in Indiana, investing almost \$700,000 to site a new manufacturing and distribution center in an existing 20,000-square-foot facility. "We've seen a lot of growth in our Midwest business and Indianapolis is the perfect hub to service those emerging markets," says Bobby Long, president of Sonco Worldwide.

The downturn in the automotive industry and the recession in general have hurt the state's economy and created high unemployment in some regions, but some companies are looking at the challenges and opting to stay in Indiana and create new business models. A partnership between Electric Motors Corporation, a manufacturer of electric vehicles, and Gulf Stream Coach, a manufacturer of recreational vehicles and motor homes, will produce the first light-duty electric pickup truck made in the United States. The partners will invest more than \$80 million to site manufacturing facilities in Wakarusa and Nappanee, potentially creating more than 1,600 jobs by 2012. "Our participation in this effort should be a large component in accomplishing the task of Indiana becoming one of the EV capitals of the world," says Wil Cashen, CEO of Electric Motors.

