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A Month for Manufacturing: New Mexico Stretches Out Mfg Day Celebration

By *Finance New Mexico*

Manufacturing is so important to New Mexico that sponsors of this year's statewide Manufacturing Day (Mfg Day) celebration are dedicating the entire month of October to raising public awareness and appreciation of this bedrock industry.

Aside from organizing the facility tours that have been central to New Mexico's participation in the nationwide event since 2013, the New Mexico Manufacturing Extension Partnership (MEP) is collaborating with maker spaces, museums, schools and youth groups to develop interactive activities to inspire young people to pursue manufacturing careers.



On the agenda are open houses where machine operators will demonstrate the types of equipment they use to create products. Other gatherings are designed to unveil emerging technology and stimulate excitement and entrepreneurial ideas among the next generation of manufacturers and innovators. Several open houses will include 3-D printing demonstrations.

The overarching goal is to make more New Mexicans aware that, according to the National Association of Manufacturers, the state's manufacturing sector:

- Contributes billions of dollars every year to the state's gross state product.
- Employs about 28,000 people in jobs that pay an average annual salary of \$58,000.
- Exported more than \$3.6 billion in goods and services in 2015 (in fact, New Mexico-made goods accounted for 96.7 percent of all exports from the state).

MEP partners have synchronized statewide festivities to coincide with National Manufacturing Day on Oct. 7. The National Institute of Standards and Technology sponsors the nationwide promotion to underscore manufacturing's importance to the U.S. economy. It does so in partnership with major industry groups.

In New Mexico, MEP launches the month-long series of events on Sept. 29, when the organization joins with Los Alamos and Sandia national laboratories in a limited-invitation event, “Where manufacturing and innovation meet.” The gathering honors New Mexico Small Business Assistance program participants, who receive help with technical challenges from scientists and engineers at the state’s two national laboratories.

Elsewhere that week, the New Mexico Tech Council will sponsor the experienceIT conference Sept. 28-30 in Albuquerque (experienceitnm.com), at which manufacturing (makeIT) is one of four major themes. On Oct. 11, the Tech Research Collaborative (which includes MEP and local research institutions) has scheduled an Innovate NM Technology Showcase in Albuquerque to draw attention to technology that’s ready for licensing.

Mfg Day organizers take their message to school campuses the week of Oct. 10, followed the next week by tours of dozens of production facilities around the state. The focus of this educational and experiential outreach is to raise public consciousness about modern manufacturing and to interest young people in learning the skills they need to operate and maintain the sophisticated, high-tech machines used in modern factories.

The manufacturing industry hopes that highlighting the kinds of work found in this sector — jobs that pay well and are intellectually challenging and professionally rewarding — might prevent the shortage of skilled workers they predict over the next decade.

Manufacturers participating in the facility tours will be listed on New Mexico MEP’s Mfg Day website (<http://newmexicomep.org/mfgday/>). The list is updated often, so those interested in seeing how products are made should visit the website regularly.

MEP is a nonprofit organization that helps manufacturers become leaner, more efficient and more profitable. Learn more about MEP at newmexicomep.org.

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