

April 2008

Outlook on Composites Automation – Composites Manufacturing 2008

The growth in manufacturing composites continues to expand at double digit rates. Much of the recent growth in composite volumes is attributed to fabricate cost-effective, large, high-performance composite structures with the aid of automated production equipment. Such was the topic of the **Society of Manufacturing Engineers' (SME) Composites Manufacturing 2008**, held in Salt Lake City, UT April 14 – 16, 2008. This year's event built upon the excellent program developed for the inaugural event held last year. In addition to many excellent presentations catered to business

development interests with a healthy dose of technical detail and related to the latest technologies and applications of automated tape laying (ATL), advanced fiber placement (AFP), automated stringer lamination, the conference also includes an expanded emphasis on robotic trimming, drilling, and inspection, and repair.

While official attendance figures have yet to be released, show attendance was well above last year's market which included about 400 registrants, attendees, exhibitors and speakers. This year's event saw many more exhibitors, a few additional speaker slots, and a considerable number of new attendees, driving total attendance estimates up to around 500 people. Continuing enthusiasm for the program has already prompted SME's organizing committees to begin preparations for next year's event. Though the date should be roughly the same as this year's event, the location could move to help highlight the important of other "composite economic clusters" outside of Utah.

THE "MARKET" FOR AUTOMATION

Leading off the general session, CMR's editor, Chris Red, was asked to provide some perspective as to the use of automation throughout the aerospace industry and how this relates to the market for composite materials. Indeed there is a strong correlation between the increased use of advanced composites in aerospace and the development and delivery of commercially available automated composites production equipment. While most of this presentation focused on the aerospace applications, the subject of automation in wind energy was also addressed. Much of the expected increase in the use of carbon fiber reinforcements within the wind industry is based on the ongoing development of tape laying and fiber placement technologies to enable the affordable and timely production of 100+ ft long blade spars.

In This Issue	
Composites Automation	
- Show Overview...1	
- Outlook for Automated Machines...1	
- ADC...3	
Ten Cate and Airborne Composite Tubulars Partner	4
India Develops Hydrogen/CNG Fuels for Autos	5
Quick Takes	6