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Outlook on Composites Automation – Composites Manufacturing 2008

The growth in manufacturing primary and secondary composite aerostructures is expected to expand at an average rate of 11% through 2017. Over the next few years growth will be much more substantial with composite aerostructures volumes growing 73% by the end of 2010, compared to 2007 estimated results. Much of the recent growth in composite volumes is attributed to the fabrication of cost-effective, large 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 Composites Manufacturing conference held last year. In addition, many excellent presentations catered to business development interests with a heavy dose of technical information on the latest advancements and applications of automated layup (ATL), advanced fiber placement (AFP) and automated stringer lamination technologies. 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 levels, which included about 300 regular attendees, exhibitors and speakers. This year's event drew many more exhibitors, featured additional speaker slots, and a considerable number of new attendees - driving total attendance esti-

mates 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 importance of other "composite economic clusters" outside of Utah. Details will be included in CMR's "Upcoming Event" page on our website (compositemarketreports.com/Calendar.htm) as they become available.

THE "MARKET" FOR AUTOMATION IN AEROSPACE

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. Red noted that the emphasis on CFRP materials in the construction of aircraft primary structures is currently being primarily driven

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