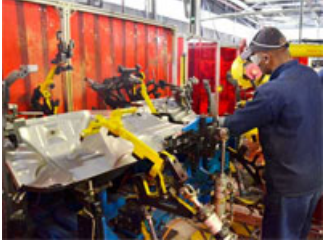


Ford upskills automotive workers

Gauteng's MEC for Economic Development, Nkosiphendule Kolisile, visited Ford Motor Company of Southern Africa's (FMCSA) Supplier Incubation Facility in Silverton, Pretoria, recently. The facility aims to provide skills development and training for BBBEE companies.



A training and development plan was jointly conceived by FMCSA and the Automotive Industrial Development Corporation (AIDC). The four-year training and development plan will enhance the overall skills and knowledge base of automotive workers in Silverton, resulting in a globally competitive workforce. Over recent years, the programme has seen the fledgling businesses that form the Supplier Incubation Facility being subcontracted by multinational suppliers who mentor the team and provide strict quality control in line with global standards.

The 7200m² Supplier Incubation Facility was created as a joint initiative between Ford, the Gauteng Provincial Government and Tier 1 Suppliers who directly supply FMCSA.

Five entrepreneurs were selected and are now housed at the facility, enabling them to supply the Ford production line.

"The Supplier Incubation Facility and BBBEE training programme is a demonstrable example of Ford's commitment to strengthening South Africa's position as a world-class exporter of vehicles and engine components," said Peter Lawson, vice-president of operations of FMCSA.

Continually trained and assessed

During the three- to five-year incubation period those incubated are continually trained and assessed at various levels in order for them to achieve Ford Quality Status. Once all the targets have been achieved, they will be graduated out of the programme in to their own enterprises at which point they will be able to supply not only FMCSA but other OEMs as well.

"Although still in its early stages we have already seen two incubates showing signs that they have the potential for early graduation, a clear indication that the programme is working," added Lawson.

Recently, FMCSA introduced a second shift at its Silverton Assembly plant; similarly the incubation facility commenced its second shift in what was a seamless transition.

"The team rose to the challenge sustaining their level of supply to Ford during this critical transition further demonstrating the continual progress of the incubates," Lawson concluded.

Barlow Manilal, CEO of the Automotive Industry Development Centre (AIDC) went on to say that once the incubates have successfully completed the programme, the plan is to assist them to establish their own facility with the current components that they have been supplying or with new components that Ford and other vehicle manufacturers are looking to procure.

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