

Manufacturing Extension Partnership of Louisiana

Testimony of Corinne Dupuy

Field Hearing on the Impact of Manufacturing Closures on Local Small Businesses



Corinne Dupuy
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Testimony of Corinne Dupuy
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Manufacturing Extension Partnership of Louisiana
Before the
U.S. Senate Small Business Committee
Hearing Entitled “Manufacturing Closures in North Louisiana:
Impact on small Businesses and Local Communities.”

April 14, 2009

Good morning Senator Landrieu and members of the committee, my name is Corinne Dupuy. I am the Director of the Manufacturing Extension Partnership of Louisiana (MEPOL). I appreciate the opportunity to talk to you today about the MEP. We are the NIST MEP affiliated center in Louisiana. The mission of the MEP is to provide Louisiana Manufacturers value-driven best practice solutions that increase profitability and productivity. With a field office located right here in Shreveport, we have first-hand appreciation of the difficulties Louisiana manufacturers are facing. In the last three years, eighteen manufacturing facilities have closed in North Louisiana with an estimated loss of 5,243 jobs. While the current economic downturn poses serious challenges for many Louisiana manufacturers, I believe it also provides an impetus for companies to consider their future. Now, more than ever, the Louisiana manufacturers require access to tools that allow them to cut costs and improve productivity but also position their company for growth through the identification of new markets and new customers – both in the U.S. and abroad. MEPOL and the entire MEP network of centers are working to provide manufacturers with those tools. We are making a difference. In 2008, in Louisiana alone we helped our clients generate new and retained sales of \$120M, achieve cost savings of \$73M and create and retain more than 1977 jobs. In supporting Louisiana manufacturers, we work with many partners, including the Louisiana Small Business Development Centers, USDA Rural Development, Southwest Trade Adjustment Assistance Center, Louisiana Economic Development and the Louisiana Workforce Commission.

A recent success was our work with Louisiana Binding Service (LBS). LBS was devastated by Hurricane Katrina in 2005. LBS is an archival products manufacturer specializing in custom high end binders. Owners and brothers Pat and Scott Williams made the tough decision to relocate to DeRidder, a small community in rural Beauregard Parish near the Texas border after losing their facility in Harvey, LA near New Orleans.

Following the relocation, numerous issues challenged the company. Only a couple employees with the necessary skills permanently relocated with the company. The company needed training for the new workers. Louisiana Economic Development, asked MEPOL to come in and work with LBS.

MEPOL assessed their workforce issues and coordinated training. The company underwent leadership and motivational classes to combat work ethics and morale issues. With a more cohesive team in place, LBS began a series of lean training to streamline and standardize their process.

As a result of the devastation of Hurricane Katrina which included widespread mold and water damage, an innovative solution to protecting important documents was realized. The Williams brothers designed a Disaster Safe County Binder™. In late 2007, a provisional patent was filed with MEPOL's assistance.

The services LBS received from MEPOL attributed to \$12 million in increased and retained sales, \$750,000 in cost savings and 115 jobs create and/or retained.

I believe that with additional resources, new collaborations and expanded partnerships, MEPOL and the entire MEP network will be positioned to not just help companies survive the near-term but also work with these organizations to set them on a path toward sustained, profitable growth. Much like our response to the recent natural disasters, we are ready to pull together in this economic disaster with targeted responses to meet Louisiana manufacturer's most immediate needs and provide tools to help them prepare for the future.