

## Chrysler plants could shift to 4-day week

### Looking at ways to save energy

BY TIM HIGGINS • FREE PRESS BUSINESS WRITER • August 12, 2008

TRAVERSE CITY -- As energy costs skyrocket, Chrysler LLC is looking at ways to save money, including, perhaps, a move to workweeks of four 10-hour days at several of its factories.

"We're looking at doing four 10s across the shops to help reduce energy costs," Chrysler Executive Vice President of Manufacturing Frank Ewasyshyn told the Free Press on Monday.

A shorter workweek had been suggested earlier this summer by Oakland County Executive L. Brooks Patterson as an option for employees. It has since spread to other governments and private businesses.

"For us, it's a big energy savings," Ewasyshyn said, "just as it is for employees with gasoline in their cars."

He was in Traverse City on Monday for the Center for Automotive Research's annual Management Briefing Seminars, a weeklong gathering of industry leaders.

Beyond condensing the workweek, the Auburn Hills automaker is looking at a variety of energy savings ideas, from optimizing tire pressure in shipping vehicles to talking with retail companies about sharing freight space.

"With the rising fuel costs, everybody is looking for new ways. ... It's about every ounce of energy you consume," Ewasyshyn said.

Plant energy usage is down 15% on a per-vehicle basis, according to Chrysler.

The automaker is looking at ways to save on freight costs by teaming up with retail companies running empty trucks in directions that Chrysler needs deliveries and vice versa. "We've been talking to people who have routes parallel to ours that are going one place to another in the opposite direction full and coming back empty. We're looking at opportunities to fill that and go the other way," he said.

Moving from a workweek of five, eight-hour days would help the automaker save money in obvious ways -- and in ways unique to a complicated manufacturing facility. For example, an assembly plant's large paint ovens can't be totally turned off during a normal five-day workweek.

"But you go to ... a three-day weekend, you can take it down cold, turn it right off. There's no problem. That saves a lot of natural gas, a lot of electricity," Ewasyshyn said.

Ewasyshyn said the automaker is talking with the UAW about going to a four-day workweek and couldn't provide a timeframe for possible rollout.

He also couldn't immediately provide a savings estimate but added it wouldn't affect workers' pay.

"It's the same 40 hours, nothing changes," he said.

Ewasyshyn said the automaker is looking at all of the plants that are "running straight-time, that are working five-days, two eight-hour shifts."

According to Chrysler spokesman Ed Saenz, possible locations to see a four-day schedule include: Conner Avenue Assembly, Newark Assembly, Jefferson North Assembly, Toledo North Assembly, Toledo Supplier Park, Trenton Engine, Kenosha Engine, Mack Avenue Engine, the Indiana Transmission Plants, Detroit Axle and Toledo Machining.

"The expectation is that most employees would jump at that," Saenz said.

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