

## Hoppe Tool owner bullish on future of manufacturing in Pioneer Valley

Posted by [dbshepar](#) June 24, 2008 17:59PM



Photo by Mark M. Murray / The Republican  
Douglas M. Hagopian, vice president and treasurer for Hoppe Tool Inc of Chicopee, holds one of the camera housing pieces his company makes as employees, Nelson Saraiva of Ludlow, center and Robert A. LaRiviere of Springfield, right, work with machinery.

**By JIM KINNEY**  
**Business writer**

CHICOPEE - Douglas M. Hagopian, vice president and treasurer of Hoppe Tool Inc., insists repeatedly that manufacturing is not dying in the Pioneer Valley.

Hoppe Tool, a family-owned company located just off Interstate 291 and the Massachusetts Turnpike, has grown sales from \$14 million in 2007 to an expected \$28 million this year.

Hagopian says that his sales staff has booked a year's worth of business already. But, he's having a difficult time finding employees qualified to run the robot-driven machine tools on the floor.

"If we can't find the people," Hagopian said, "we've got to go someplace."

Hoppe was one of five Massachusetts companies chosen this month to be part of the Next Generation Manufacturing Initiative through Associated Industries of Massachusetts, Mass Development and Massachusetts Manufacturing Extension Partnership.

Brian R. Gilmore, executive vice president of Associated Industries, said the average manufacturer in Massachusetts has 50 or fewer employees and \$3 million to \$20 million in annual sales.

"And there are a ton of them," Gilmore said. "They might not have the size and the expertise to take advantage of lean manufacturing, cutting down on waste and expense."

Hoppe Tool has gone from 55 to 95 employees in four years. Of the 95, about 70 workers are on the production floor. Workers on the floor start at \$13 an hour and go up to \$23 an hour.

"I have people here who made more than \$100,000 last year in a factory job," Hagopian said.

The company is also looking to add to its 40,000 square feet, either through building on or possibly moving part of its operation across First Avenue to a Dow Jones & Co. building.

"It's not easy," said Hagopian, who runs the business with his brother, company president Eric D. Hagopian.

The company makes precision aircraft parts, housings for infrared scopes used by the military and for the U.S. border, brackets for mounting gear on military vehicles and machines used to manufacture Gillette razors.

The other companies are Mason Box Co. in North Attleboro, Matouk Textiles in Fall River, Munksjo Paper Inc. of Fitchburg and Spectro Coating Corp. in Leominster.

AIM had 20 companies apply for the program, Gilmore said. The five companies will get an evaluation from the Massachusetts Manufacturing Extension Partnership worth \$15,000.

"From soup to nuts," Gilmore said. "From inventory control to spoilage to shipping and receiving."

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## Comments

### **howieandtodd says...**

"I have people here who made more than \$100,000 last year in a factory job," Hagopian said.

That's a 70+ hour work week for 50 weeks, plus 80 paid hours vacation at \$23.00 per hour. Are these highly skilled craftspeople, or machine attendants? I don't know of too many surgeons who can stay attentive for 70 hrs a week for 50 weeks.

Posted on 06/25/08 at 12:34PM

### **madjackblack says...**

Bonus my friend. That's what we do, if we make it we give it back at the end of the year. They probably work 60 hours a week, and got a nice bonus. It's hard to find skilled workers now a days, you can make a nice paycheck if you have the skills.

Posted on 06/25/08 at 3:08PM

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