



Mike Talaga, vice president and general manager of Nishikawa Cooper LLC, believes the key to his company's success is striving for continuous improvement.

The manufacturer, he said, has also benefitted from a number of other factors over the years, including proximity to customers, being able to draw on a trained, experienced workforce, and receiving generous support from local economic development and government officials. That support has included tax abatement and training grant money offered locally or arranged through the state of Indiana.



Vice President and General Manager Mike Talaga, foreground, and Director of Finance John Heim.

"LaGrange County EDC and the town of Topeka have been very cooperative when we've asked for help," Talaga said. "We've gone through some turbulent times in the automotive business. (Local officials) have been here right by our side."

One initiative in particular that went beyond the traditional scope of assistance was the city's

decision to build a new access road in and out of the Topeka plant, allowing for safer, easier travel. The road separates heavy semi-truck traffic from employee traffic.

Nishikawa Cooper is a joint venture of Cooper Standard Automotive and Nishikawa Rubber Co. The company manufactures dynamic sealing systems for both foreign and domestic automotive customers, including Honda, Nissan, Chrysler, Toyota, Subaru and Mazda.

The Company File

Nishikawa Cooper
Year Established: 1971
Locations: Topeka, Bremen, Detroit
Annual Revenue: \$200 million
Employees: 1,000 (504 in Topeka)
Topeka Facility Size: 220,000 square feet



Samantha Keeslar of Nishikawa Cooper operates a finishing station where parts for the Honda CR-V are made.

Deciding LaGrange County Factors:

- Convenient access to customers
- Trained, experienced talent pool
- Supportive economic development, government partners

Talaga said the company has demonstrated steady growth in a number of areas. Revenue has grown from \$145 million in 2007 to about \$200 million today; the company is poised to add 45,000 square feet of warehouse space adjacent to its Topeka plant; and in 2012 Nishikawa Cooper purchased \$5.5 million in new manufacturing equipment.

Talaga said the future for the company in LaGrange County is promising.

"We want to be here 10 years from now, 15 years from now."

"We remain committed to the principle of continuous improvement," he said. "That includes establishing and maintaining good relationships with all of our customers and introducing improved high technology. We're constantly trying to do things a little bit better."

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