

IN Factory Retools For New Wheelchair Car Model

The Associated Press

MISHAWAKA, Ind. (AP) — The northern Indiana factory that once made Hummer SUVs will be retooled in the coming month to start producing a luxury version of a wheelchair-accessible car.

The AM General factory in Mishawaka started last year building for Miami-based Vehicle Production Group the MV-1 car, which features a 3-foot high door that allows a person in a wheelchair to use a built-in ramp to get in alone and sit next to the driver.

Sales of the original model are going well and the company has received good feedback from customers on the higher-end version that will be sold in the upper \$40,000s, said Mike Carney, chief marketing officer for the Vehicle Production Group.

"On this car, we are moving as fast as we can," Carney told the South Bend Tribune for a story Thursday (<http://bit.ly/MCGmA1> [1]). "We think it will have great appeal."

About 75 workers will be laid off next week until mid-July while the factory is prepared for the new model, said Gary Wuslich, AM General's vice president of human resource.

The new MV-1 LX's features will allow the operator of the vehicle to open the door and deploy the ramp by merely pressing a button on the key fob. Carney said that model will also have paneling and a full mapping system.

"It's a positive retooling and restaging," Carney said. "It's a good sign. It means we are doing well."

The AM General factory built Hummers for General Motors until 2009 year, when it stopped producing the H2. The company's adjacent factory in the city just east of South Bend produces Humvees for the military.

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