



The Detroit News

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Metro Final

GM to offer more buyouts

Two-thirds of factory workers eligible for deals; plant closings possible

By SHARON TERLEP
The Detroit News

General Motors Corp. will roll out retirement incentives to nearly two-thirds of its 72,000 hourly workers and may have to further cut U.S. production in 2008, which could mean eliminating shifts or closing plants, the company announced Thursday.

It was unclear how many workers GM hopes to clear out, but CEO Rick Wagoner said offers are being made to 46,000 blue-collar workers, setting the stage for another dramatic reduction to GM's work force. More than 5,000 workers received offers earlier this month. The second phase of the buyouts will be rolled out in February.

Wagoner told Wall Street analysts gathered at a Dearborn conference that even after those workers are gone, anemic U.S. auto sales may force cuts at assembly, powertrain and stamping plants throughout the country.

The reductions may be necessary despite \$4 billion to \$5 billion in annual savings that Wagoner said GM will get from

the landmark labor deal struck this fall with the United Auto Workers.

"We're delivering on the turnaround plan we established in 2005, and have exceeded expectations on virtually all counts," Wagoner said.

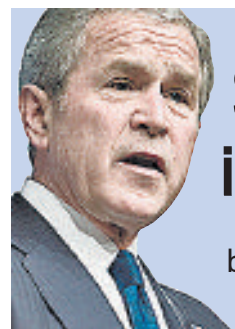
"At the same time, it's clear that we'll face some challenging headwinds in 2008."

Wagoner said GM is still negotiating details of the buyouts with the union.

UAW President Ron Gettelfinger said Thursday the union rejected the idea of any possible plant closings.

"Eventually there will be a buyout, but I'm not going to put a time frame on it," Gettelfinger said. The labor leader talked to reporters after speaking to the Detroit area chapter of the Labor & Employment

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ECONOMY

Stimulus plan may include tax rebates

Feds race to head off recession; rebates up to \$800, other help weighed.

NATION & WORLD, 4A

Granholtz backs Cobo expansion

State would provide help for \$595M upgrade of center pitched by Ficano; hurdles remain.

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By ROBERT SNELL
The Detroit News

DETROIT — Wayne County Executive Robert Ficano unveiled a \$595 million expansion plan for Cobo Center on Thursday, backed by support from Gov. Jennifer Granholm to restructure city and county debt and free up \$150 million for the project.

The plan is the culmination of 10 years worth of study and follows more than a year of intensive debate that has whittled the price tag of the project from almost \$1 billion. The plan is the latest

among numerous proposals floated in recent years, from minor tweaks to major overhauls.

This plan also would create a tax-free zone at the facility, saving buyers from paying the 6 percent sales tax on boats, cars, electronics and other big-ticket items.

Granholm, who attended the plan's unveiling at Cobo Center, said the proposal is the closest all sides have come to a workable

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Howes: Is this plan different? 1C



Donna Terek / The Detroit News

Gov. Jennifer Granholm, Wayne County Executive Robert Ficano, left, Mayor Kwame Kilpatrick, Detroit auto show co-chair Carl Galeana, and financial adviser David Sowerby attend Thursday's unveiling.



Texting puts kids at risk

Metro Detroit police struggle to keep up with high-tech predators

By CHRISTINE FERRETTI | The Detroit News

LIVONIA — Parents just now learning to monitor their children's Internet habits to ward off predators or inappropriate content have new worries: text messages, cell phones and video games.

Text messaging — lightning quick, abbreviation-filled and often tough for adults to decipher — is fast becoming the preferred method of communication for teens. The Pew Internet and American Life Project estimates two-thirds of teens with cell phones "IM" — or instant message.

And so do crooks. Metro Detroit police agencies report an uptick in pornographic photos and solicitations swapped through cell phones, text-message harassment and pedophiles luring children on chat rooms of Internet-based gaming systems like the Xbox 360.

Text and cell phone crime may eventually surpass traditional Internet crimes, predict officers with the State Police's Livonia-based Computer Crimes Unit.

The unit is teaching officers statewide to play popular online games such as Halo that allow players to chat live. Police say they may soon begin trolling the games in search of online predators who have caught on to police stings in Internet chat rooms.

"Predators are always the first to adopt new

Please see Texting, Page 11A

Bryan Mitchell / Special to The Detroit News

Lt. Tom Kish of the Michigan State Police Computer Crimes Forensic Unit uses technology to solve crimes.

Lovestruck teens run off, leave parents heartbroken

Cops search for boy, 15, girl, 13, who left with van, dog, \$680, Xbox.

minivan, an Xbox 360 video game system and a dog named Mandy.

Five days later, the parents still haven't heard from the youths and they're worried what began as a quaint excursion could end as something different.

"I feel terrible," said Mary Wismer, 55, of Clio, which is 13 miles north of Flint. "I just can't believe he hasn't called."

Wismer is the mother of Gage Petherbridge, 15, who left home at

4 a.m. Saturday with nine pairs of jeans, the family's cocker spaniel and \$580 he had received for Christmas.

Also missing that morning was his girlfriend, Hannah McConnell, 13, of Clio, who took \$100 from her mother's purse.

Three weeks earlier, Wismer had cut off communication between the two because they were

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Hannah McConnell, 13, and Gage Petherbridge, 15, both of Clio, have been missing since Saturday. "I just can't believe he hasn't called," says Gage's mother.

Wismer family Associated Press

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