'A good start to 2010'



GEORGE GARDNER / Staff

Workers assemble X-Series vehicles at the BMW Manufacturing facility near Greer.

BMW sees profits accelerate in 1Q

Global recovery, new models expected to fuel growth

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BMW Group's first-quarter revenues were up 8.1 percent from a year earlier, while profits swung to a positive number from the negative posted a year ago.

Also, the sales volume of BMW, Mini and Rolls-Royce brand vehicles increased by 13.8 percent to 315,614 units in the first three months of 2010 from 277,264 in the same period of 2009.

"The BMW Group has made a good start to 2010," said Norbert Reithofer, chairman of the company's board of management. "We increased earnings significantly in the first quarter and are now back on a growth course on almost all car markets."

He said the company is "confident that we will meet our 2012 growth targets and our vision for 2020."

"The worldwide economic recovery is underway," said Friedrich Eichiner, member of the BMW board responsible for finance.

BMW Manufacturing Co.'s plant in Greer is nearing completion of a $750 million expansion, which includes a new assembly facility and expansion of the paint shop. Production of the X3 sports activity vehicles will be moved from Austria to Greer this year. Bobby Hitt, public relations manager of the plant, said some prototype vehicles have been constructed.

Production of the new-generation X3 will take place in the new assembly facility. Sales of the vehicle dropped 9.3 percent in the first quarter as it nears the end of the current model. Currently, the Greer plant produces X5 sports activity vehicles and X6 sports activity coupes. Global sales of the X5 increased 4.8 percent in the first quarter. X6 sales increased 21.2 percent.

Revenues for the first quarter were euro 12.4 billion, up from euro 11.5 billion in the previous year. Profit before tax improved to euro 508 million from a loss of euro 198 million in the first quarter of 2009.