Local industries

Most companies working more



FILE PHOTO

Local industries with the Oconee County Industrial Group, including BorgWarner in Seneca, are reporting an uptick in productivity that bodes well for future hiring.

BY CARLOS GALARZA
THE JOURNAL

SENECA — Local manufacturers are seeing an increase in work orders that could lead to hiring more workers if the hopeful trend continues.

Larry Smith, plant operations manager at Schneider Electric in Seneca, said Monday that business is picking up and the local plant enjoyed a "very busy" June.

Smith said that at a recent meeting of the Oconee County Industrial Group hosted by US Engine Valve, just about every member of the group acknowledged business was picking up.

Smith said Schneider

'cautiously' upbeat

hours to fill orders; some hiring again

Electric brought in 12 temporary workers to keep up with increased work orders. However, Smith said a large part of the spike in business was related to demand for product following the devastating flooding in Nashville, Tenn. in the spring.

"We want to wait to see if this increase in demand is sustainable or whether it's the result of a non-repeatable flooding event," Smith said.

Oconee County Economic Development Commission Director Jim Alexander took note of the uptick in the industrial sector.

"Many industries have

SEE **INDUSTRIES,** PAGE **A5**

INDUSTRIES: Automotive market is picking up, exec says

FROM PAGE A1

seen increased orders and most are working more hours," Alexander wrote in the EDC's monthly newsletter. "In fact, some of the plant managers indicated they are even working weekend shifts."

As a result, Alexander said some of the plant managers shared with him that they are hiring again, while some indicated additional hiring would take place over the next few months. "Folks are starting to spend a little," he said.

Todd Bennington, vice president of operations at BorgWarner in Seneca, said everybody is being "cautiously optimistic."

"The automotive market is rebounding quicker than most of us had expected," Bennington said.

The positive outlook in the industrial community is a welcome turn of events in a county still feeling the weight of double-digit unemployment.

According to the latest state jobless numbers, unemployment in Oconee is down from a high of 15.1 percent in January to 11.1 percent last month.

According to the EDC, the top five manufacturing employers in the county are Duke Energy (1,500 employees), Itron (715), Schneider Electric (655), Koyo Bearings (460) and Covidien (423).

carlos@dailyjm.com | (864) 973-6685