

GM Orion Plant's Paint Shop Features 'Blue Suit Crew'

by Jim Stickford

It's not easy achieving perfection, but that hasn't stopped GM from installing a new vehicle paint system at its Orion Assembly plant in Lake Orion.

Kevin Nadrowski, plant communications manager for GM's southeast region including Orion Assembly, said painting a new vehicle is not just part of the manufacturing process – "it is an intricate chemical operation requiring constant scientific monitoring."

"Trained experts, members of General Motors' 'Blue Suit Crew,' follow elaborate precautions to ensure that final vehicle paint finishes are pristine."

The Blue Suit Crew puts on blue Personal Protective Equipment (PPE) lint-free suits and hats that are required at all times in the paint facility – hence the name, "Blue Suit Crew." These clothes are to be worn only in the paint facility. The suits are part of GM's commitment to craftsmanship.

Nadrowski said this attention to detail includes banning many everyday personal hygiene items – such as lotion, cologne, hair spray, deodorant and silicon – from being used in GM paint shops because their mere presence can cause the new paint to become contaminated.

And, Nadrowski said, it's not just management that is looking to perfect the painting process. Paint shop employees are constantly seeking the sources of paint contamination, looking for clues and hunting down potential contaminants.

"The process of painting a vehicle properly is much harder than the average person would assume," said Anton Busuttill, Orion Assembly's paint shop area manager.

"We have many different factors that we have to be cognizant of at all times."

"The weather – including temperature and humidity – is one of



Special gloves avoid leaving lint.

those major factors over which we have no control."

The goal for the Blue Suit Crew is a perfect finish.

"There are precise stages each vehicle goes through in order to leave GM's paint shop with phenomenal colors," Busuttill said.

"The vehicles are prepped, dipped in treatment, and sprayed with PVC antichip material, primer, base coat and finally clearcoat."

"The vehicles are then checked to ensure they are in compliance in terms of quality."

"If they meet expectations, they are sent to General Assembly to continue the build process."

Yves Dontigny, paint production shift leader at the Orion facility, has been with GM for 18 years. He started out at the company's St. Therese facility in Canada and has worked at many plants.

He said the paint system in Orion Assembly is able to save time and money by eliminating a couple of painting processes.

Fewer processes mean fewer opportunities for something to go wrong.

Additionally, Dontigny said, they have switched to a waterborne paint. That means less emissions into the atmosphere

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A GM worker checks for painting imperfections using a special scanner.

because they no longer need a natural gas drying process. Having one less process not only reduces chances for imperfections, it also means vehicles can be painted more quickly.

Nadrowski said that attention to detail extends beyond deodorant.

Some clothes have silicon fibers that can interact with paint and leave imperfections. So, workers – the Blue Suit Crew – are required to wear special

clothing and gloves that won't leave fibers behind because fibers can spoil paint jobs.

Dontigny said GM has trained him and his team in the new painting process and that they are "really proud to be a part of a state-of-the-art painting process."

"We take great pride in this," Dontigny said. "What I like is that now cars come out with fewer defects so we spend less time correcting problems after the fact."

Authors to Speak at Warren Library

The Warren Public Library will hold an event hosted by author and teacher Gloria Nixon-John on Saturday, Sept. 7, from 10 to 1.

The memoir writer will share excerpts from her own memoir and the memoirs of other authors and talk about memoir writing as a vehicle for personal growth. She'll also help participants craft their life stories for posterity.

The workshop is for adults. Beginning and advanced writers are welcome.

The class will be held in the conference room next to the Civic Center Library. Call 586-574-4564 to reserve a spot.

In other library news, Ksenia Rychtycka, author of the book, "Crossing the Border," will talk about her book on Monday, Sept. 16, beginning at 6 p.m. in the conference room next to the Civic Center Library.

Rychtycka's book is a collection of short stories about characters facing events in the Ukraine's recent history and their own personal journeys in both the United States and the Ukraine.

For those interested, Rychtycka will have copies of her book for sale and for signing.

Those wishing to attend are asked to pre-register by calling 586-574-4564.

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