

Aero Metals, Inc.

Aero Metals, Inc. is a manufacturer of high quality, investment cast components, located in La Porte at 402 Darlington Street. James W. Fleming, President and CEO founded the company in 1963 as a start-up company. The company now manufactures 5,000 different types of castings for 300 customers throughout the world. The national and global company, employing over 400, has many good reasons to call La Porte home.

Mr. Fleming and his colleagues that founded Aero Metals were employed at the Howmet Corporation in La Porte in the early 1960s. Howmet is a renowned manufacturer of high quality investment castings for the aircraft engine industry. Mr. Fleming saw an opportunity to manufacture high quality castings for a niche market that covered a broader set of customers, including control systems for aircraft.

Since 1963, the company has expanded to become one of the largest manufacturers of investment cast components in the country. The customers of Aero Metals, Inc. are a national and global "who's who" of the corporate world. For example, the company manufactures products for Volvo Penta marine engines, Saab of Sweden's aircraft division, Boeing Aircraft (control systems parts), Bombardier aircraft in Quebec, Canada, and Airbus Industries of France.



A highly skilled and loyal labor force is an essential key to success according to Mr. Fleming. Labor turnover is very low. The firm recruits many of its skilled people from La Porte and northern Indiana. Two engineering schools in the region, Purdue University and Rose-Holman Technical Institute in Terre Haute, Indiana have a high representation among technical and professional staff. A number of employees have returned for postgraduate training at the University of Notre Dame in nearby South Bend, with their education being financially supported by Aero Metals. "Loyalty is best built through a team approach", states Mr. Fleming. A technically challenging work environment in which people take pride in their work and help each other to achieve excellence is the key.

In addition to nearby opportunities for technical training and recruitment, La Porte also has a number of other geographical advantages for the company. La Porte is in the epicenter of the investment castings industry in the United States. Consequently, the technical and support services for this industry are close by. La Porte provides Aero Metals the opportunity to be centrally located, near both suppliers and customers. Second, La Porte is on the major east-west interstates 80 and 94 that connect to both coasts and Canada, and near interstate 65, the connector to the South and Mexico.



The City of La Porte Airport is another key for business success. Mr. Fleming, an avid pilot, believes nothing is more valuable than a face-to-face meeting. The company's products are complex, and cannot be sold over the phone or the internet. Face-to-face communication with the customer is important to describe the features of the unique products that the company manufactures. The La Porte Municipal Airport thus becomes a business asset. The company has several corporate aircraft that allows Mr. Fleming and his staff to fly out to an existing or new customer in the eastern two-thirds of the United States within one business day. Alternatively, the company can pick up a customer and fly him or her to La Porte to tour the plant and review specifications with staff, usually in one day, avoiding all the hassles associated with traveling from a major

airport. The La Porte Municipal Airport has a 5,000-foot runway and ancillary facilities to accommodate most corporate aircraft.

The business case for La Porte is strong, but Mr. Fleming points out that the quality of life in the community is important as well. The community is a good place to raise a family, has the opportunity for country living while still being close to city amenities, has an excellent local hospital, and a relatively low cost of living. Truly there are several factors making Aero Metals what it is today, but most importantly the company and community are good places to work and live.

