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Flexible Metal Hose Manufacturing (FMH) Company, Inc. of Costa Mesa, Calif., has been named The Boeing Company 1997 Small Disadvantaged Business Supplier of the Year.

The award, which was presented on July 28, by Boeing Chairman and Chief Executive Officer Phil Condit, is given annually to a minority-owned small business that is one of the company's top suppliers.

FMH, founded in 1950, designs, manufactures, and tests products that include flexible metal bellows, seals, and hoses for use in both high pressure and low pressure systems that are specially designed for use with pneumatic, hydraulic, or fuel systems. FMH supplies these products to a variety of Boeing commercial airplane, defense and space system programs, which include, but are not limited to, the 737 and 747 programs; the F-22, F-18, F-15, C-17 programs; the International Space Station; and space shuttle.

"They are a very easy supplier to work with," said Falyssia Campbell, the Boeing Information, Space and Defense Systems employee who nominated FMH for the honor. "They are very good at what they do, are constantly seeking to improve their processes and technology, but have the wisdom not to exceed their level of capability."

Campbell explained that FMH has consistently achieved 100 percent on-time delivery of its products to Boeing. This has been accomplished by using the Integrated Product Team (IPT) approach to business management. Working as an integrated team, the 75 FMH employees share responsibilities, have broad lateral support, encounter few limitations and focus on communications. Use of the IPT concept also provides the employees excellent control over internal product schedules, which are developed from the customer's schedule requirements. The result is that on most contracts, production is completed on time and delivery is often ahead of schedule, she said.

A major factor in FMH's success is a direct result of proactive planning, Campbell noted. The employees anticipate problems and take steps to resolve them before they can impact schedules. FMH management also works to form partnerships with customers, where the resources of both companies can be used to the greatest extent possible.

Campbell emphasized that another contributing factor to FMH's success is the nature of the relationship between the owners and the employees. The company functions very much like a close-knit family. There is virtually no turnover among the employees and many have been with the company for 20 years or more. The IPT concept allows the combined talents of the employees to be fully utilized. Furthermore, FMH management does not hesitate to ask for and rely on employees' recommendations and decisions. In short, FMH is an excellent example of outstanding success resulting from teamwork and mutual respect, she said.

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