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Colorado No. 2 in private aerospace jobs

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The Metro Denver Economic Development Corp. released a report today confirming that Colorado's aerospace industry is the second-largest nationwide when ranked by total private employment.

Colorado has total private aerospace employment of 26,650 workers, an increase of 12.9 percent from 2006 to 2007, according to the report.

California has the largest aerospace industry in the nation.

Colorado moved ahead of Texas to become second-largest, according to the Metro Denver Economic Development Corp., which has been saying for months that Colorado was likely to reach the No. 2 spot.

"It was our own space race," said Tom Clark, executive vice president of the economic-development group. "I don't think we'll ever be bigger than the mothership, California, but we're very, very proud."

Clark said aerospace companies look to Colorado for expansion because of its large aerospace industry with well-trained employees and cheaper costs than California.

When ranked by the concentration of private aerospace employment, Colorado ranks first in the United States, according to the report.

New projects and operations have been fueling the growth of the aerospace industry in Colorado. The United Launch Alliance, a joint venture between Lockheed Martin and Boeing rocket operations, started operations in December 2006 and now has about 1,600 employees here, according to the report. Lockheed Martin's work on an \$8.2 billion NASA contract for the Orion crew-exploration vehicle that it won last year also has given the industry a huge boost, with nearly 500 employees here. Another 600 Orion-related jobs could be added in Colorado by 2009, according to the report.

In March 2006, then-Lt. Gov. Jane Norton touted that Colorado was the third-largest aerospace economy, with a total of 157,000 positions connected to aerospace.

Now, direct and indirect employment in Colorado's aerospace industry totals 171,200 workers, according to the Metro Denver Economic Development Corp. report, which was researched by Patty Silverstein of Development Research Partners.

Staff writer Kelly Yamanouchi can be reached at

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