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Spartan Motors Introduces New Quality System RV Supplier Builds on Best Practices of the Auto & Other Industries to Improve Quality

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CHARLOTTE, Mich., June 20 /PRNewswire/ -- Spartan Motors (NASDAQ:SPAR)

today announced it has developed and instituted a new quality audit designed to improve the quality of the motorhome body-to-chassis interface process.

Building on the QS and ISO quality standards of its automotive brethren, the Charlotte, Mich. manufacturer of custom chassis for RVs, emergency vehicles and buses has begun implementing Spartan Quality 2000, or SQ2000. The innovative system, a first-of-its-kind in the RV industry, focuses on helping original equipment manufacturers (OEMs) of motorhomes improve product quality through monthly audits that determine the best and most efficient ways to utilize Spartan chassis.

"SQ2000 tackles one of the most critical issues RV manufacturers and suppliers face today: the interface of the motorhome body to the chassis so that a high-quality platform is created," said John Szykiel, president and chief operating officer of Spartan. "Our new quality management system is a further step in solidifying long-term partnerships with motorhome OEMs by helping them improve quality from the chassis on up.

"Quality issues number among the top complaints of motorhome owners, causing them to exit the RV lifestyle. We're certain improvements realized by the OEMs through SQ2000 will help them reduce warranty costs, improve sales and make for happier motorhome customers."

Spartan Motors' engineers, under the guidance of Quality Director David Markham, have spent the last six months developing SQ2000. Customer teams will conduct the on-site monthly audits of the OEMs, recording and pinpointing methods to improve the overall manufacturing process.

The teams will provide real-time and electronic documentation of the audits by using digital cameras, laptop computers and portable printers. This type of immediate feedback will allow the OEM to make "just-in-time improvements" to the manufacturing process based on input and suggestions from Spartan Motors. In addition, the use of electronic communication will allow real-time data to be sent back to Spartan Motors, which will make the appropriate changes.

"SQ2000 blends the best elements of ISO and QS standards with other quality concepts to create a system tailored to the unique needs of the RV industry," said Markham, who spent 15 years in the automotive arena before joining Spartan. "Adopting many of these rigorous quality standards, which have gained international acceptance in the automotive arena, allows us to 'raise the bar' in the RV industry by establishing uniform quality standards.

"Spartan Motors continues to work to anticipate -- and then fulfill -- the needs of our RV customers. Continuous improvement is a fact of life these days in any type of manufacturing environment, and we think SQ2000 will help our customers move toward that goal."

Markham said that Spartan Motors decided to use monthly rather than yearly audits because of the "human issues" in manufacturing -- such as job changeover -- and the need to focus on the issue of continuous improvement. After an initial trial period, SQ2000 will be modified to incorporate changes and additions suggested by the OEMs.

Spartan Motors expects to move toward making the SQ2000 system universally accepted by the OEMs it works with and plans to apply the standards to its supplier network.

"Audits, when they have been done, were only completed on an annual basis," Markham said. "In today's fast-moving marketplace, that's not effective for anyone. No other chassis manufacturer has attempted such a program, yet we're convinced SQ2000 is the way it should be done. Spartan and SQ2000 have raised the standard for the industry."

Spartan Motors, Inc. (<https://theshyftgroup.com/>) is a leading developer and manufacturer of custom chassis for fire trucks, recreational vehicles, transit buses, school buses and other specialty vehicles. The Company also manufactures fire and rescue vehicles through its subsidiaries Luverne Fire Apparatus, Quality Manufacturing and Road Rescue, Inc. and owns a majority interest in school bus manufacturer, Carpenter Industries, Inc.

Source: Spartan Motors, Inc.

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