

World and National Engineering News in Brief

GE may avoid some layoffs

ERIE -- General Electric Transportation may avoid laying off some of the 1,480 employees it projected earlier this quarter, according to the *Erie Times-News*.

Over 500 of the possible 750 employees who are eligible for early retirement have filed paperwork to be considered for the special retirement program.

According to the *Times-News*, any time a job reduction is underway, employees between 55 and 60 that have 25 or more years of service become eligible for early retirement.

Each employee that selects early retirement may prevent one job lost for an employee who is ineligible for the early retirement program.

GE has said that the planned layoffs are due to a slowdown in the rail industry, which they expect to bounce back eventually. The company did not get a single locomotive order placed by customers in 2009.

UK student designs instructional rocket

KINGSTON (ScienceDaily) -- A rocket motor which can be fired safely and observed at close range has helped a Kingston University engineer secure his place in a prestigious international space competition.

James Arkwright, from Morecambe in Lancashire, came up with the educational tool as part of his university degree. He designed the 50 centimetre tall portable motor, which will help engineering students learn more about the mechanics of a rocket.

Made out of graphite, steel and acrylic, it shows students – from school age to degree level – how fuel burns in a rocket's combustion chamber and allows them to watch it at close quarters.

- Science Daily

Engineering students blog through Europe

22-person group including faculty, students documents journey through Germany, Switzerland

KRISTIN SLIWINSKI
engineering editor

On Thursday, October 8th, a group of 17 plastics engineering technology students and 5 faculty members set off on a ten-day journey through Germany and Switzerland. Among faculty is Ralph Ford, Director of the School of Engineering, and Jonathon Meckley, associate professor of engineering. Three seniors - Tim Farrell, Jessica Patz, and Keith Maloney - are blogging about their experiences as they travel.

They began their journey in Frankfurt, Germany, and took a train to Heidelberg. They arrived at the hostel Friday morning, heading back out "to get some much-needed food," as one blogger writes. The weather was dismal and rainy, but the students made the best of it; they went on a tour of the Hofeintritt ErmaBigte Castle in Heidelberg's old town. Saturday afternoon, the group got back on the train to Interlaken, Switzerland, where they arrived late at night. One blogger writes that "It was great to experience their culture and sample the food of Switzerland." The group took a break on Sunday to experience some of the "touristy town."

Aside from the experience they will gain in regards to German and Swiss engineering, the students on the trip are also experiencing foreign travel, many for the first time.

"Students are learning how to navigate through foreign countries using different transport modes," said Dr. Ralph Ford, Director of the School of Engineering. "For example, to get

from Switzerland to Germany today for the Fakuma Injection Molding Trade show, we started on train, switched to a ferry boat, then had to catch a bus to the show. That combination was by far the fastest way to get there."

Monday, the professors asked the students to meet them at the train station by 9:30 in the morning to give them their daily schedule. Some of the group went to a castle, and then through a cave tour, while the rest of the group went on an "all-day hiking adventure."

Tuesday began much the same as

Monday, with the meeting at the train station, though four members of the group - Tim Farrell, Nicole Cocuzzi, Paul Baird, and Keith Maloney - went to the top of Mt. Schilthorn, which was used as a filming site for a James Bond movie. The group left Interlaken around 3 o'clock, taking the train to St. Gallen.

Wednesday, October 14th, the group woke early to take a train to Diessenhofen, Switzerland to tour Schöttli, "a Swiss high precision injection mold manufacturing facility that specializes in molds for the medical and packaging industries."

Johannes Strassner, a managing director for sales and marketing showed the group around, educating the group on "what Swiss technology brings to the plastics industry." The group then broke up into 3 smaller groups, each receiving an extensive tour of the factory.

"In terms of insights, this is a good example of a company being able to stay competitive by adapting to their markets," says Dr. Ralph Ford, Director of the School of Engineering. "[Students] also got to see a very technically advanced company that is staying ahead of competition based on value of technology."

On Thursday, the group visited the Fakuma injection molding show.

"This event put students outside of comfort zone - which I see as a good thing," says Ford. "They had to interact with company representatives to understand their technology, most of the time discussing with people for whom English is a second language."

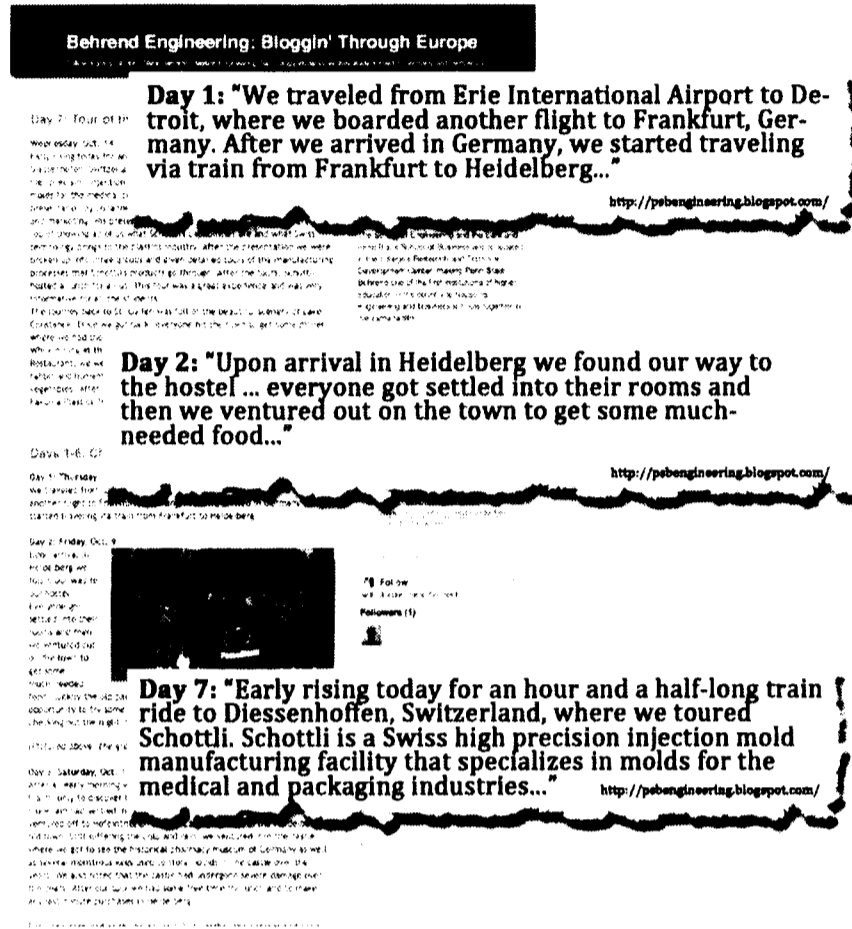
At press time, the group was located in a small town in Switzerland, where they are seeing some cultural sights before a day of rest which, Ford says, "we all are looking forward to."

Some mishaps have accompanied the group, but most have bordered on amusing rather than troubling.

Ford recounts a faculty member who stressed the need for students to be on time, then missed a train after locking himself out of his room during a shower at a youth hostel. Though he caught up with the group later, the faculty member has been "razzed" by students all week.

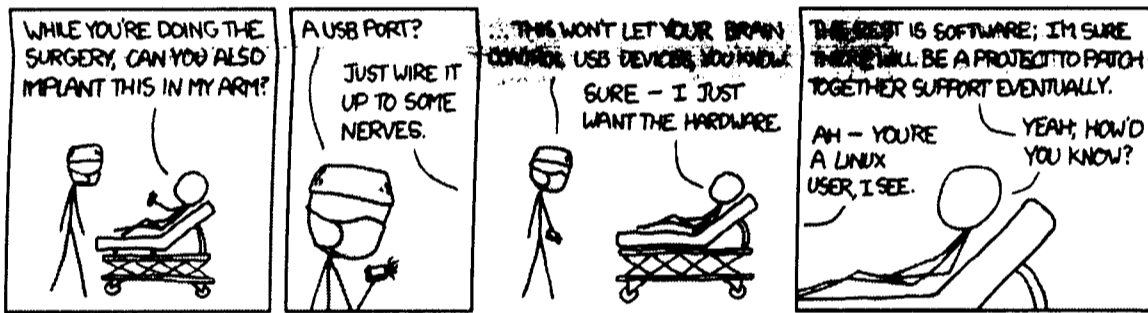
Another incident, perhaps less amusing, occurred when a faculty member left their Eurorail pass in his room, and was caught by authorities without it on the train.

The engineering students and faculty will continue blogging about their experiences until they arrive back home on Sunday, October 18th.



This week's xkcd:

A webcomic of romance, sarcasm, math, and language.



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