

Geiss anticipating big year in U.S.

By Angie DeRosa
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CHICAGO — Manfred Geiss is confident that 2006 will be a banner year for sales of his company's thermoforming machinery into the U.S. market.

"We are seeing the best year for us in the U.S.," Geiss, the company's managing director, said in an interview at NPE. "Since 2002, North America has become the strongest of the global markets for Geiss."

The company's advantage, officials said, is closed-chamber technology that eliminates the sagging of the sheet during heating. The company uses a pyrometer to sense the sheet temperature as a control point for heating, rather than time.

Since its start in the U.S. market, Geiss (Booth E9833) has sold more than 30 machines, with sales volume in excess of \$21 million. This year has been strong, and the company expects \$10 million in U.S. sales.

"There are products in this market that can be made better and faster, so the main highlight is that these ma-



Geiss AG Managing Director Manfred Geiss displays a Ford Mustang hood scoop molded during NPE 2006.

chines are extremely flexible," he said.

At Geiss AG's headquarters in Sesslach, Germany, the machines are built on customers' orders. Geiss said that he currently is targeting several international markets for growth, including China, Japan and Eastern Europe. Geiss exports about two-thirds of its machines from Germany.

At NPE, the company formed

Ford Mustang hood scoops. But officials pointed out that they sell equipment to a variety of end markets.

"If we relied heavily on auto, we would be hurt by it," said Michael Roche, Eastern regional sales engineer for Geiss Thermoforming USA LLC. "But we're not."

The firm sees its need to fill niche areas, Roche said, especially as the automotive indus-

try makes strides to reduce costs and produce lighter and more energy-efficient vehicles. Plastic and composite components have been key for achieving that goal, he said, and they will fulfill the niche requirement of painted exterior surfaces.

Still, thermoforming offers cost benefits for small-volume and niche vehicles over traditional injection molded parts.