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Charles V. Tines / The Detroit News

Navis operations manager Jeff Anderson, left, and franchise owner Ross Gilmore wrap up a large piece of equipment for a moving project at the Novi franchise of the national logistics company.

Bulky relocation jobs help shippers expand

■ Franchises available for company that specializes in moving odd-shaped pieces of equipment.

BY JENNIFER YOUSSEF
The Detroit News

Navis Pack and Ship Centers, a national logistics company, is planning to open 10 franchises in Michigan over the next five years, six of them in Metro Detroit.

Based in Greenwood Village, Colo., Navis specializes in packing and coordinating the transportation of large, heavy and awkwardly shaped pieces such as factory equipment, cement slabs and art work.

The company currently has two locations in the state; a one-year-old franchise in Novi and another in Grand Rapids, which is set to open in May. Navis wants to put new stores in Dearborn, Troy, Sterling Heights and Bloomfield Township.

President and CEO Ben Blakeley said Michigan is a great place for the company to expand. Not only are there a large number of plant closings, consolidations and relocations with the shrinking of the auto industry, but there's also growth in the number of startup businesses spurred by auto company buyouts.

That adds up to a lot of large equipment that needs to be moved.

A franchisee can expect to invest \$175,000 to \$200,000 for equipment, training and other

Navis plans

Navis wants to put 10 new shipping and packing centers in these Michigan cities:

Troy	Ann Arbor
Dearborn	Lansing
Sterling Heights	Flint
Bloomfield	Traverse City

■ For information, call (866) 738-6820 or e-mail franchiseinfo@gonavis.com.

startup costs, Blakeley said. Each store employs up to 10 workers. The jobs pay \$8 to \$12 an hour for warehouse workers, \$15 to \$20 an hour for warehouse managers and \$30,000 to \$40,000 for sales positions.

Blakeley acknowledged that the number of jobs is small and won't help Michigan's employment picture too much. But he said with such a big need for more logistics centers in Michigan, the new stores will be successful.

"As long as there are a lot of businesses consolidating, we'll do well," he said.

And there's plenty of that going on here: A Stroh's ice cream plant in Detroit closed in April and moved to Belvidere, Ill. And earlier this month, DaimlerChrysler AG's Chrysler Group announced plans to build a new factory in Marysville to replace its Detroit Axle plant, and one in Trenton to replace its existing engine factory in the city.

Pharmaceutical giant Pfizer Inc. said in January it will shutter

its research and development facility in Ann Arbor by the end of next year. The company also plans to close research facilities in Plymouth Township and Kalamazoo.

Novi store is successful

Navis' first Michigan franchise, in Novi, is doing exceedingly well, winning the Rookie Franchise of the Year award this year for fastest sales growth, Blakeley said.

The store opened in January 2006 and did more than \$200,000 in sales its first year, franchise owner Ross Gilmore said.

Gilmore's store employs four full-time and two part-time workers. He's helped big companies such as Delphi, Nissan and Hyundai move industrial equipment and also assists private individuals with residential moves.

"We had a great first year," said Gilmore, 38. "We found there's definitely a market for this. We're a niche that has not been filled yet."

Michigan's "sizable" business base makes the state an attractive place for logistics companies to expand, Blakeley said, adding that he wants to have 260 locations nationwide in the next five years.

Navis has 80 commercial franchises and 50 retail shipping centers across the country now. The company doesn't franchise its retail shipping centers.

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