

money

PLOTTING A COMEBACK Volkswagen seeks a return to relevance

Story, B-7

▲ General Motors Co
37.36 +.82/+2.2%

▲ Stein Mart
1.27 +.02/+1.6%

▲ Nelnet Inc
48.14 +.71/+1.5%

**LOCAL
MOVERS**

▼ Weyerhaeuser
32.07 -.54/-1.7%

▼ Rayonier Inc.
28.52 -.49/-1.7%

▼ Northrop Grumman
268.83 -3.38/-1.2%

Gas prices spike across Florida, nation



With pipelines in Texas affected by Hurricane Harvey, gasoline prices are going up, including at the Daily's in San Marco. (Bruce Lipsky/Florida Times-Union)

Weather damages Texas pipelines, slowing delivery

By Drew Dixon
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The weather turmoil in Texas is taking its toll on the First Coast and the nation in terms of gasoline prices that keep climbing every day.

In Jacksonville, the average price of a gallon of unleaded gas stood at \$2.47 on Friday morning, up 10 cents since Thursday and 19 cents in the last week,

according to gasbuddy.com, a website that monitors gas prices in local markets.

The lowest price per gallon in Jacksonville Friday was at the Gate Fleet Services station on West Beaver Street, where the business was charging \$2.20 per gallon Friday morning.

At least two major pipelines — one that ships gasoline across the south-

ern United States and to New York, and another that flows north to Chicago — have been slowed or stopped because of flooding and damage caused by Hurricane Harvey.

Part of the pipeline that runs through Texas is shut down and inspections must be done before the entire system can be fully operational again, Colo-

GAS continues on B-7

Auto sales rise despite slowdown in Houston

Harvey hurts deals in big U.S. market

By Dee-Ann Durbin
Associated Press

DETROIT | August was a strong month for U.S. auto sales, but Hurricane Harvey is putting pressure on some of those gains.

General Motors said its sales rose 7.5 percent over last August, while Toyota's were up 7 percent and Volkswagen's rose 9 percent. All three automakers reported strong sales of SUVs.

But not everyone got a boost. Nissan's sales dropped 13 percent and Fiat Chrysler's sales were down 11 percent. Ford and Honda both saw sales drop 2 percent.

U.S. auto sales were initially expected to increase slightly in August compared with a year ago, breaking a seven-month streak of sales declines. U.S. sales are plateauing after reaching a historic high last year. But August had one more business day than last year, and buyers were getting good deals on popular outgoing models like the Toyota Camry.

But Harvey has hurt demand in the Houston area — the ninth-largest vehicle market in the nation — cutting U.S. sales of new cars and trucks by 1.3 percent, or 20,000 vehicles, forecasting firm LMC Automotive said. Car shopping site Kelley Blue Book now expects a 1 percent decline in August sales.

But people with damaged cars will need to replace them quickly. In the month following Superstorm Sandy in 2012, vehicle sales in the New York area jumped 49 percent, said Jonathan Smoke, the chief economist for Cox Automotive, the parent of Kelley Blue Book.

Smoke estimates that 300,000 to 500,000 vehicles will need to be replaced as a result of Harvey. That demand will help automakers, who can move their excess inventory to Houston. But lower inventory in the rest of the country will mean consumers will be less likely to find good deals, Smoke said.

Until last Saturday, August was shaping up to be a strong month at the eight Bayway Auto Group dealerships that Darryl Wischnewsky owns in the Houston area. Then came Harvey. None of Wischnewsky's dealerships suffered flooding or other damage, but he says he's seen other dealers up and down the freeways lose all of their inventory.

His group, which includes Lincoln, Chevrolet, Fiat Chrysler, Volkswagen and Volvo dealers, shut down last Saturday as the storm approached and just started reopening on Thursday. Losing the Saturday alone probably cost 60 to 70 sales, Wischnewski said.

"Just that one day in Houston, that's thousands of cars," he said. "I think it will probably affect the national numbers as well."

For August, automakers said: General Motors

SALES continues on B-7

AMAZON CENTER CRANKS UP



The new Amazon fulfillment center is up and running on Pecan Park Road.



The first wave of employees at the new Amazon fulfillment facility get to sign the center's first robot Friday. (Photos provided by Amazon)

Amazon started bringing in employees and shipping out packages this week at its new facility on Pecan Park Road. Employees are going to work in waves, as the center gets up to speed. Nearly 350 were there on the first day earlier this week.

The company has said about 1,500 will work there, not to mention another 1,000 at its 103rd Street center, which is expected to open later this month. The Pecan Park facility will handle smaller packages, while the one on 103rd will handle larger items.

The first item received for inventory at Pecan Park was a Tactical Portable Powerlight. The first customer order shipped was a Real Techniques Miracle Complexion Sponge.

At right, new employees receive an enthusiastic welcome as they arrive on an orange carpet.



With success of Tech Coast Conference, organizers consider more events

Organizers hope to discuss with city ways to attract more of community

By Drew Dixon
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More than a week after the fourth annual Tech Coast Conference in Jacksonville, organizers say they're ready to branch out and possibly hold several events each year.

About 700 people attended the conference at the Prime Osborn Convention Center. But Stephen Pol-

lan with the JAX Chamber IT Council, said while the first year of the conference started out much smaller with an initial crowd of about 400, organizers are feeling comfortable with its current size, although he acknowledged he'd always welcome more attendees.

"We certainly know that it's at a comfort level," Pol-



Pollan

lan said the Aug. 23 event received some national attention from PR Wire, a communication service that highlights public relations events and developments. Two presentations at Tech Coast Conference featuring cybersecurity and bio tech developments were picked up, Pollan said.

This year's conference was so encouraging, Pollan said, there is now consider-

ation for holding more than one a year.

"We're talking about instead of just putting out one event, putting out a series of events. Maybe one a quarter and we can do more events," Pollan said. "We want to make sure that we're encompassing the different areas of technology that are occurring here in Jacksonville."

Pollan said he hopes to begin discussion with Mayor Lenny Curry's office to get more commu-

TECH continues on B-7



Samantha Sotter (right), a graphics/UI designer for C7 Creative, runs Rob Sly from Business Valuation Inc. through one of her company's interface apps linked to virtual reality goggles at Tech Coast Conference recently. (Bob Mack/Florida Times-Union)