

business

## Study: Strong job growth in geographic clusters of Colo. businesses

Aerospace, telecom and financial services

By Miles Moffeit  
The Denver Post

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**Buckley Air Force Base** | The Aurora base is one of four in Colorado that employ a total of 28,470 people. There are also about 90 aerospace companies operating in the private sector in the nine-county area

surrounding Denver, employing nearly 20,000. (Brian Brainerd, Denver Post file photo)

A new study into geographic clusters of Colorado companies turned up healthy job-growth trends — particularly in the aerospace, telecommunications and financial-services industries — that often surpassed or rivaled other states.

Commissioned by the Metro Denver Chamber of Commerce, the research is intended to showcase the shinier side of the state's most competitive sectors so it can bolster its case for recruiting and keeping those businesses.

Other clusters highlighted were energy, bioscience, information technology and aviation.

Omitted from the study for the second year were beverage and data- hardware industries — a signal that the business coalition is shifting its marketing strategies away from areas of the economy that have lost some luster because of job losses.

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## Aerospace-sector growth

The aerospace industry saw 13 percent job growth for the five-year period ending in 2009. In 2009, it employed nearly 20,000 people in a nine-county Denver area.

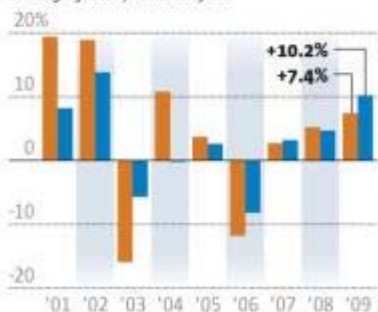
### Employees

Change from previous year



### Companies

Change from previous year



Source: Metro Denver EDC The Denver Post

(CLICK TO ENLARGE)

"We're focusing on those industries where we have a competitive advantage," said Vicky Lea, aviation and aerospace industry manager for the Denver chamber.

Some of the positive job numbers in 2009 cited in the chamber study authored by economist Patricia Silverstein of Development Research Partners:

- Colorado's aerospace field saw 13 percent job growth in the five-year period ending in 2009. The nine-county area surrounding Denver ranked second among the 50 largest metro areas for private aerospace workforce concentrations, employing nearly 20,000 workers. About 90 aerospace firms operate in the area.
- The Denver area was fourth nationally for broadcasting and telecommunications employment, at 41,390 employees, growing almost 2 percent during the recession, while overall the industry saw losses of almost 5 percent nationally.
- Financial-services companies also placed fourth nationally for job concentrations in the nine-county region at 43,950.

Industry clusters are geographic concentrations of interconnected firms and institutions within a particular field.

The aerospace sector includes commercial as well as military operations in the state. Lockheed Martin, which works on projects such as the Phoenix Mars Lander and the Orion crew exploration vehicle, has the largest commercial presence. The state's four Air Force bases, including Buckley in Aurora, contribute another 28,470 jobs to the region.

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**Lockheed Martin** | NASA's Phoenix Mars Lander was assembled and tested at the company's Denver-area facility. (NASA)

A big reason for the growth in aerospace locally was a spike in employment triggered by the creation of Centennial-based United Launch Alliance, the joint venture between Lockheed and Boeing to develop rockets.

"When we saw the introduction of United Launch Alliance (in 2007), we gained 1,800 workers almost overnight, so that had a very dramatic influence on growth rate," Silverstein said.

Among the firms preserving strong workforces were Ball Aerospace & Technologies in Boulder, with more than 3,000 staffers in the state, and Centennial-based Sierra Nevada Space Systems, with 600.

Mark Sirangelo, chairman of the space-propulsion system and satellite-parts firm, said steady revenue upturns have positioned the company to hire more technical workers this

year.

"Across our divisions in Colorado, we'll hire about 200," Sirangelo said. "They're technical and engineering types of positions to do assembly and construction work."

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### Job totals

*Major Colorado employers with ties to aerospace and defense:*

**11,300**

Lockheed Martin

**10,310**

Buckley Air Force Base

**7,580**

Peterson Complex\*

**7,950**

U.S. Air Force Academy

**3,400**

Ball Aerospace

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**2,700**

Northrop Grumman

**2,300**

Boeing

**2,630**

Schriever Air Force Base

\*-Includes Peterson Air Force Base and Cheyenne Mountain Air Force Station (including NORAD, USNORTHCOM, AFSPC and SMDC/ARSTRAT)

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