

Middletown company gets \$12M NASA contract

Local facility that made Apollo heat shields gets \$12 million deal for Orion spacecraft shields.

By [Jessica Heffner](#) Staff Writer

Friday, July 11, 2008

MIDDLETOWN — A local manufacturing facility has landed a \$12 million contract to produce heat shields for a NASA shuttle.

Magellan Aerospace Corp. was awarded the contract through the National Aeronautics Space Administration's prime contractor for production of the Orion, a spacecraft intended to replace the U.S. space shuttles and eventually be launched to the moon and Mars.

The heat shields will be produced at the company's Aeronca facility located at 2320 Wedekind Drive in Middletown, said Elena Milantoni, Magellan's corporate controller.

The lightweight titanium honeycomb heat shield panels will protect the space capsule during re-entry into the atmosphere, said Keith Wyman, director of sales and marketing at the Middletown facility.

The Middletown site was selected for production because it produced a similar shield for all of NASA's Apollo programs during the 1960s and '70s, he said.

"We'll be watching (the astronauts) go up and protect them on their way down," Wyman said.

The company expects the facility to deliver two test units by 2009 with additional funding given for final production for up to 28 more in time for the Orion's first flight in 2011.

If the products prove successful, the Aeronca facility will produce all the heat shields for NASA, which will be replaced for each mission, Wyman said.

"It means a lot of work, significant revenue and additional employment for the area," he said.

Wyman said the Middletown facility currently manufactures exhaust systems for airplanes.

Contact this reporter at (513) 705-2843 or jheffner@coxohio.com.