



# VIEW*S* & VISIONS

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## Exports Expand Opportunities for West Virginia Businesses

Stephen E. Spence, Director  
International Division, West Virginia Development Office

Steve Spence is Director of the International Division, West Virginia Development Office. The International Division promotes trade and investment opportunities for West Virginia.

Mr. Spence has organized and led West Virginia trade missions to Asia, Africa, Australia, Europe, North America and South America. He joined the West Virginia Development Office in 1979.

He has served as an industrial development representative and as Executive Director. In 1990, Mr. Spence was assigned to Nagoya, Japan, where he established West Virginia's first overseas trade office. He assisted with establishing the state's European office in Munich, Germany in 1999.

Mr. Spence serves as a member of the West Virginia Export Council, the State International Development Organizations (SIDO), the Appalachian Regional Commission's Export Trade Advisory Committee and other international trade organizations.

He graduated from West Virginia University with a bachelor of arts degree in political science.

West Virginia companies, large and small, are successfully competing for business opportunities in international markets.

Exports of coal, chemicals, polymers, metals and other products to 144 countries contributed \$8.6 billion to the Mountain State's economy in 2013. Coal alone accounted for \$4.5 billion. With 40 percent of U.S. coal exports originating in West Virginia, the state once again was the top supplier of coal to the world's energy and steel production markets.

### Export Promotion Program

In 1985, the West Virginia Development Office launched a program to encourage small- and medium-sized businesses to pursue export markets. In this effort, the Development Office organizes trade missions and trade shows around the world and provides other support services.

The first steps of the program, which will celebrate its 30th anniversary in 2015, included a series of in-state seminars, the creation of product literature and a single trade mission in June 1985 to promote the export of hardwood products. The small delegation visited Japan, Taiwan and Korea and met with potential customers in the building products and furniture industries.

From that modest beginning, the service evolved into the Development Office's current "Export Promotion Program." The office works closely with the U.S. Commercial Service, the West Virginia Export Council and other partners to support both the state's novice and experienced exporters. The support includes assistance in identifying specific market opportunities, connecting the companies with service providers, such as international bankers, attorneys and freight forwarders, evaluating a company's "export readiness" and other services as needed.

### Trade Missions and Shows

In addition to these consulting services, the Development Office sponsors four to six trade missions annually. Since 1985, these missions have introduced West Virginia products to potential customers in countries located on six continents.

In July 2014, one such mission visited the Mexican cities of Mexico City and Monterrey. Mexico was targeted due to its market potential for West Virginia products and its reasonable proximity to the state. Although Mexico is the second-largest market for U.S. exports, it is the ninth-largest for West Virginia. A delegation of nine participants visited the country and participated in pre-arranged, business-to-business meetings with agents, distributors and potential end-users of their products. The participants included the following:

- Eagle Manufacturing, Wellsburg, Brooke County (Safety industrial products)
- Leveltek International, Benwood, Marshall County (Stretch leveling machines)
- Nippon Tungsten, Barboursville, Cabell County (Repair and regrind services for rotary die cutters for diaper and feminine products production lines)
- Rolling Ridge Woods, Parkersburg, Wood County (Hardwood products)
- Special Metals Corporation, Huntington, Cabell County (Nickel-based alloys)
- Steel of West Virginia, Huntington, Cabell County (Steel products)
- Sur-Loc Flooring, Kearneysville, Jefferson County (Plastic flooring solutions for special events)
- Tecnocap, Glen Dale, Marshall County (Metal closures for glass, plastic and metal containers)
- West Virginia Higher Education Policy Commission, Charleston, Kanawha County (Enrollment in West Virginia public universities)

“The Development Office got us in the door and got us in touch with the actual decision-makers at these companies,” said Brad Caserta, sales representative with Steel of West Virginia. “We started in Mexico City and transitioned our way into Monterrey. There were translators, drivers and folks to take care of us in each city. I couldn’t have asked for a more efficient trip.”

In addition to Mexico, recent Development Office trade missions have included stops in Colombia, China, Chile, Australia, South Korea and Singapore.

### Governor’s Export Awards

To recognize the success of West Virginia exporters, the “Governor’s Commendation for International Market Entry” was established in 2002. The award celebrates a company’s success in making an export sale to a new country.

Based on the practice of small retailers framing their “First Dollar” earned and displaying it on their wall, the Market Entry award includes an actual bill in the currency of the new market. Earlier this year, more than 100 of these awards, recognizing “Our First Yen,” “Our First Euro” or other currencies, were presented by Governor Earl Ray Tomblin during a luncheon ceremony.

West Virginia exporters receiving the awards typically display them in their lobbies or conference rooms to show their customers the international distribution of their products. Also, the companies’ employees can take pride in knowing the goods they produce reach customers well beyond the state’s borders. ▽

For more information on exporting, Development Office services and upcoming trade missions, visit [www.worldtradewv.com](http://www.worldtradewv.com).

