

## **ZF LIFETEC Opens State-of-the-Art Technology Center in Washington, Michigan**

- **ZF LIFETEC invests in expanding and modernizing its passive safety systems site in Washington, Michigan**
- **The centerpiece of the technology center is a cutting-edge sled system for simulating a wide range of crash scenarios**
- **“The new technology center is a symbol for customer proximity, technological excellence and our ambition to develop the best solutions exactly where they are needed”, says Rudolf Stark, CEO of ZF LIFETEC**

**Washington, Michigan, USA / Alfdorf, Germany – October 6, 2025 – ZF LIFETEC has inaugurated a new technology center, marking a milestone in passive vehicle safety. This new expansion in Washington, Michigan combines state-of-the-art testing technologies with decades of expertise. It is designed to help automakers meet regulatory requirements and drive innovation in automated driving, interior design, and real-life safety. “We’re thrilled to open our new testing and R&D center,” said Rudolf Stark, CEO of ZF LIFETEC. “By concentrating and enhancing our test equipment to this new building, we’re positioning ourselves for the future, strengthening collaboration with our partners, and improving response times for our customers. Supporting our customers locally remains our top priority.”**

ZF LIFETEC has modernized the existing Washington facility and constructed a new state-of-the-art research and development center. The new facility merges advanced testing capabilities with long-standing expertise, helping automakers not only meet regulatory standards but also accelerate innovation in automated driving, interior design, and real-life safety.

### **Commitment to Innovation and Customer Proximity**

Spanning approximately 82,000 square feet for the newly expanded technology center – including the new sled system – and a total of around 194,000 square feet, the Washington site now hosts a comprehensive testing, prototype and R&D facility. As part of the two-year construction project, the Romeo site was integrated into the Washington facility, consolidating prototype development, testing, engineering, and design under one roof. “This new test center is a clear commitment to innovation, to our customers – and it’s a real competitive advantage,” said Ned Reckamp, Senior Vice President of Inflatable Restraint Systems and North America Passive Safety Systems. “This move boosts our efficiency and flexibility and positions us to meet current and future NHTSA and NCAP requirements.”

### **Understanding Real-World Crash Scenarios**

Modern traffic safety begins with understanding complex crash dynamics. In a frontal collision with heavy braking, for example, the pitch effect – the vehicle’s tilting motion around its lateral axis – alters occupant positioning and affects seatbelt tension and airbag deployment. Oblique or offset collisions generate complex movement patterns, especially relevant for new interior concepts. Differences in vehicle height during collisions create asymmetric forces that challenge airbag and structural designs. Collisions with roadside infrastructure or rollovers also place high demands on adaptive restraint systems. With its expanded Michigan site, ZF LIFETEC is laying the groundwork for developing and testing next-generation safety technologies.

### **Technological Highlight: The New Sled System**

A standout feature of the renovated facility is the new sled system equipped with a servo-controlled pitch-motion simulation unit. Delivering 2.75 meganewtons of force – comparable to the thrust of an Airbus A380 – the system enables highly realistic dynamic crash testing. It allows precise simulation of vehicle motion in complex crash scenarios such as frontal impacts with heavy braking, offset collisions, and rollovers. This technology also facilitates realistic testing and validation of adaptive passive safety systems tailored to future technologies like (semi-) automated driving and next-generation interior concepts (Interiors of the future).

#### **ZF LIFETEC**

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### **Comprehensive Testing Capabilities for Maximum Safety**

The new ZF LIFETEC facility offers a broad range of testing capabilities, including precise airbag deployment tests at both component and system levels, extensive durability and functionality tests for airbags, seatbelts, and steering wheels, and dynamic testing using bungee deceleration sleds and servo-hydraulic sleds. Environmental simulations replicate temperature, humidity, vibration and corrosion under realistic conditions. Material analyses and testing enable in-depth evaluation of materials used. The development and testing of restraint system prototypes make the site a central innovation hub for passive vehicle safety in North America.

### **A Site with Tradition and Expertise**

Originally built in 1987, the Washington site – along with the Romeo site dating back to the late 1970s. The new ZF LIFETEC facility brings together engineering, program management, sales, finance, purchasing, HR, leadership, prototype and testing operations under one roof. As part of a global network with over 51 locations in 22 countries and more than 36,000 employees, ZF LIFETEC is reinforcing its presence in the North American market with this investment.

#### Captions:

**ZF LIFETEC Opening Washington, MI 01:** (left to right) Harald Lutz, Head of Research and Development at ZF LIFETEC, Mark Hackel, Chief Administrative Officer of Macomb County, Rudolf Stark, CEO of ZF LIFETEC, Ned Reckamp, Senior Vice President of Inflatable Restraint Systems and North America's Passive Safety Systems at ZF LIFETEC, Sebastian Sam Previti, Mayor of Washington Township, Ramiro Gutierrez, President of ZF North America, and Joseph McCulloch, Senior Business Development Manager at the Michigan Economic Development Corporation (MEDC) at the opening of the new R&D and testing facility in Washington, MI. Photo: ZF LIFETEC

***ZF LIFETEC Grand Opening Washington, MI 02:*** *With its new Technology Center in Washington, MI, ZF LIFETEC is future-proofing its operations to meet upcoming NHTSA and NCAP safety standards. The centerpiece of the expanded facility is the new dynamic sled system.*

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**About ZF LIFETEC**

ZF LIFETEC is a leading passive safety technology provider for the enhanced protection of vehicle occupants. Employing more than 36,000 employees dedicated to the mission of saving lives with a technology driven approach, the company develops, manufactures and distributes a comprehensive product portfolio including airbag, seat belt and steering wheel systems, covering a wide range from small vehicles in the volume segment up to sophisticated luxury vehicles. Featuring a market share exceeding 20 percent in its core product categories, ZF LIFETEC has a worldwide presence at 51 locations across 22 countries. In the fiscal year 2024, the Group generated sales of EUR 4.8 billion. Based on its strong relationships with a diversified customer base of global OEMs, driven by outstanding quality, long-standing R&D collaborations besides a strong global innovation platform, ZF LIFETEC is well positioned for future growth opportunities arising from the automotive megatrends electrification, (semi-) automated driving, smart interior, as well as increasing safety demands and stepped-up safety regulations worldwide.

**Learn more at [www.zf-lifetec.com](http://www.zf-lifetec.com)**