

ASA Tire offering dealers \$1 million 'bailout'

By Kathy McCarron, Tire Business staff

NASHUA, N.H. (March 10, 2009) — U.S. banks and Detroit auto makers have secured their government bailouts. Now tire dealers can get their own version of a "bailout," courtesy of ASA Tire Systems.

The Nashua-based computer technology services firm is offering a total of \$1 million in the form of an "economic bailout package" for qualifying tire dealers in the U.S. and Canada to invest in ASA's products and services.

ASA said the money is in the form of a grant, so dealers don't have to pay it back. The funds are put toward a percentage or total purchase of ASA technology, ranging from software and hardware to Web site and e-commerce enhancements.

The criteria for recipients is a stated need—such as poor economic conditions, natural disasters, or loss of management staff—or plans to use the technology for the betterment of employees or the local community. An ASA spokesperson said the company has no idea how many tire dealers will receive bailout funds as the quantity will vary on a case-by-case basis. The program will be offered through the end of 2009 or until the funds run out. The pot will be divided up among recipients, so no one dealership can get \$1 million.

ASA Tire Systems President Wayne Croswell came up with the bailout idea after attending a tire maker's dealer meeting and discovering that while some tire dealerships are still prospering, others were struggling in the current recession, said Sky Souza, ASA senior marketing professional. "He knows that a lot of dealers are struggling and he wants to give back (to the tire industry) and help them make it through this economy."

"We have been committed to the independent tire dealer spanning three decades and this is one way we can help make a difference in the market we are dedicated to," Mr. Croswell said. "It's about giving and helping, like our tag line states, 'Technically speaking, we are family.'"

The \$1 million comes off the company's bottom line, said Ms. Souza, who admitted it might "hurt in the short term" but the company is looking at the long-term benefits as the program is open to existing and new customers.

Tire dealers can apply for the funds by filling out a form on the ASA Tire Systems Web site, www.asatire.com/bailout, or by contacting an ASA representative. Since the program was announced March 9, Ms. Souza said the company had already received several inquiries.

ASA claimed that a majority of tire dealerships have neglected their technology infrastructure for years and have failed to replace or upgrade business software, servers, wide area networks, local area networks, firewalls, desktop computers, Web sites, intranets and e-commerce.

"Now more than ever, dealers have to earn their customer's business. More importantly, they need to make sure they keep that business," ASA said in a statement. "Technology gives dealers' employees the necessary tools to deliver information to customers when they need it, assuring both the sale and a satisfied customer. Satisfaction has to be at an all time high, otherwise dealers will lose business."