

DEVELOPMENTS

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Growth

Auto Glass Supplier Locates in Shelby County

The company that supplies glass for the Mercedes-Benz M-Class chose Shelby County for its southeastern regional customer service center. AP Technoglass Alabama will occupy a 50,000 square-foot speculative building in the Shelby West Corporate Park.

"The site provides us with easy access to international air and interstate ground transportation, a seasoned, technically-oriented labor force, plus neighboring technical and business colleges. The area will also provide an outstanding quality of life for our associates," said Joe Hargrove, who led the selection team.

Shelby County is one of the nation's fastest growing counties, and one of Alabama's most affluent.

AP Technoglass Company, an affiliate of Asahi Glass America, manufactures automotive glass and glazing assemblies in Ohio, Kentucky, Tennessee, Canada and Mexico for domestic and import markets.

Auto Suppliers Choose Marshall County

Auto suppliers HFI and Federal-Mogul both recently made announcements that will mean up to 235 new jobs for Marshall County.

HFI, a second-tier supplier of automotive interior small parts, such as headrests, armrests, seat and door components, will locate its new operations in the former Wrangler sewing facility in Arab. HFI will support the TS Tech operations in Boaz for the production of the Honda Odyssey minivan. The company will initially employ 20 to 30, with that number increasing in 2002 as the Odyssey comes into full production.

Federal-Mogul announced that it will consolidate its chassis operations into its Boaz facility, saving 220 jobs at that plant and adding 165 new jobs. The Boaz facility will support both original equipment and aftermarket manufacturers for brake and chassis components.

Mercedes Milestone

The 250,000th Mercedes-Benz M-Class rolled off the production line on January 22, one year ahead of schedule. According to the 1993 original projections, 60,000 to 65,000 vehicles would be built at the plant annually. After two expansions totaling \$80 million, the plant produced more than 80,000 last year. In 2000, more than 52,000 M-Class vehicles were sold in the United States, making it the top selling Mercedes-Benz vehicle in the nation.

Currently, 1,900 team members work at the Tuscaloosa plant building four different versions of the M-Class that sell in more than 135 countries.

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Honda Update

The first group of Alabama employees hired for production work began their pre-orientation for Honda Manufacturing of Alabama in late November. The orientations are to introduce the company to the employees and to formally welcome them, as well as giving them the chance to meet Mikio Yoshimi, the president and chief operating officer.

The employees had completed a six-week training program that included classes and hands-on work simulation, sponsored by Alabama Industrial Development Training.

Groups of varied sizes will be hired each month until the plant opens for production in late 2001. By that time, Honda anticipates a work force of 1,500.

Construction for the plant is on schedule. The paint shop is completed and structural steel is in place for the engine plant.

IPSCO's Alabama Steelworks Begins Production

IPSCO began production at its Axis facility in mid-January with a limited run of liquid steel that was processed into 165 tons of steel slabs. The mill will produce about 1.25 million tons of liquid steel annually when at full production. Hiring to staff the facility is nearly complete with over 250 employees on site currently undergoing training.

Although many U.S. steel manufacturers are facing a downturn, IPSCO Senior Vice President and Chief Commercial Officer says the Axis plant's capabilities will keep its steel in demand. "What they fail to appreciate is the multipurpose capability of our rolling mills...IPSCO can produce both hot rolled coil and discrete plate on the same mill. This permits us to soak up our excess capacity in the form of hot rolled coil."

Education

Aerospace Training Center Opens

The first phase of a \$40 million, three-phase aerospace and technology park at Calhoun Community College in Decatur is complete.

Construction of the \$28 million 38,000 square-foot Aerospace Training Center began in July 1999. The park will provide education and training programs, technology demonstration and transfer and regional economic development support to ensure regional and national economic competitiveness. The other two phases of the park will be an Advanced Manufacturing and Information Technology Center and Advanced Manufacturing Technology Labs.

The center will continue to train Boeing's Decatur work force and will add courses to train workers in the semiconductor field.

Excellence

Wayman Earns CED

Troy Wayman is the fourth Montgomery Area Chamber of Commerce professional to earn the Certified Economic Developer designation awarded by the American Economic Development Council. Wayman has been with the chamber for seven years and manages economic development projects. He is a graduate of Faulkner University.

Montgomery Cited as a Top Ten Hot Spot

When it comes to starting and growing a business, Montgomery is the 8th best small metro area in the U.S. and Birmingham-Tuscaloosa ranks 12th among large metro areas. The rankings, featured in the December issue of Inc. magazine, were included in a study by the economic research firm, Cognetics Inc. Two other Alabama cities, Mobile (18) and Huntsville (29) also made the list of Entrepreneurial Hot Spots: The Best Places in America to Start and Grow a Company. The study looked at factors such as business start-ups and the growth index of new companies.

Opportunities

Executive Director Needed

The West Central Partnership of Alabama is seeking an executive director. This position will plan, direct and coordinate the activities of the Partnership in order to support the retention and expansion of existing businesses and industries and for business recruitment in Fayette, Lamar and Pickens Counties. The executive director will be required to reside in one of the member counties.

Qualified applicants will have three years experience in economic development or related field; excellent communication and interpersonal skills; proficiency in computer skills; and preferably, a four-year degree from an accredited university. Salary is commensurate with education and expertise. Please send resume and salary requirements to P.O. Box 7, Fayette, AL 35555 by February 28.