Goodyear plant in Tenn. sold to tire maker

The Associated Press

The former Goodyear tire plant in Union City has been sold to a maker of off-road equipment tires, officials said Friday.

The sale to Titan Tire Corporation is effective immediately, but the purchase price is not being disclosed, Goodyear Tire and Rubber Co. spokeswoman Amy Brei in Akron, Ohio, told The Associated Press on Friday morning.

The 43-year-old Goodyear plant was Obion County's largest employer until its closure in July, putting 1,800 employees from West Tennessee and western Kentucky out of work.

Titan makes tires for large earth-moving equipment, farm implements and other off-road vehicles. It was not immediately clear how many jobs would be created in Union City.

Titan plans to use the plant to mix rubber, but the company was not immediately releasing any details on when production would begin or how many people would be employed there, said Krista Gray, investor relations spokeswoman for Titan.

Gray said Titan CEO Maurice Taylor would have a statement Monday with further details.

Union City Mayor Terry Hailey said the announcement brought a sense of optimism to the city and county, which saw unemployment grow dramatically and residents leave the area to find other jobs after the plant closure.

Hailey said Friday he had not heard from Titan about its plans for the plant.

"We hope that they'll put in a manufacturing plant there where they'll employ several hundred people," Hailey said.

The sale comes after weeks of rumors that Titan was going to buy the plant, Hailey said. Goodyear informed Hailey on Thursday that the sale had been completed.

"The effect will be that maybe we'll create lots of jobs for the folks around here who have lost their jobs," Hailey said.

The disclosure of the sale comes after the U.S. Department of Labor announced Tuesday a $3.4 million grant for re-employment services to about 850 laid-off Goodyear workers in the region.

The grant was awarded to the Tennessee Department of Labor and Workforce Development. Secretary of Labor Hilda L. Solis said the workers will be better

prepared for good jobs in Tennessee's growing industries by enhancing their skills using the grant.

The Labor Department said $1.3 million is being released initially. The rest will be made available as needed.

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