Michelin to Build New $750M Plant in SC

JEFFREY COLLINS - Associated Press

GREENVILLE, S.C. (AP) — Michelin announced plans Tuesday to break ground on a new plant in Anderson County that could create 500 jobs making giant tires for use on heavy equipment in mines, quarries and construction sites.

The company plans to spend $750 million on the new plant and expanding a plant in Lexington that already makes the tires. Demand for Earthmover tires has increased more than 20 percent since 2009, Michelin North America Chairman Pete Selleck said.

"Nearly every Earthmover tire is sold before it is produced," Selleck said.

Selleck and other Michelin executives joined Gov. Nikki Haley and U.S. Sen. Lindsey Graham for the announcement Tuesday morning at the tire company's North American headquarters in Greenville.

More than a third of Michelin's 22,000 North American employees work in South Carolina. The French tire maker built its first American plant in South Carolina in 1973, and the Anderson County plant will be its ninth facility in the state.

"It's a tribute to the productivity of our employees and the pro-business environment in South Carolina that the company is expanding its Earthmover capacity in the state where we first began manufacturing in the United States," Selleck said.

The new plant will be located in Starr, next to an existing Michelin rubber processing plant. Michelin hopes to have it running at full capacity by 2015.

The state offered the company $9.1 million in grants for infrastructure improvements at the site, said Amy Love, spokeswoman for the South Carolina Department of Commerce.

Tuesday announcement marks the third big new tire plant to come to South Carolina in seven months. In September, Bridgestone Americas Inc. said it would spend $1.2 billion and bring 850 jobs to Aiken County by building a new tire plant and expanding an existing facility.

In October, Continental Tire announced a new $500 million plant in Sumter County that would employ 1,700 workers when finished at the end of the decade.

And in May, Michelin announced a $200 million expansion of an existing plant in Lexington that will add 270 jobs making passenger tires.

South Carolina will produce more tires than any other state in the nation in 2013,

Selleck said.

"We are very proud that since 1973 Michelin North America has called South Carolina home," said Graham, R-S.C.

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