

GM Increases Production At 3 Plants

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DETROIT (AP) — General Motors Co. will go to 24-hour operations at factories in Kansas, Michigan and Indiana to make up for production lost due to a large-scale factory consolidation announced earlier in the year.

The automaker says it will add third shifts at its Fairfax plant in Kansas City, Kan., in January. That will be followed in April by third shifts at factories in Delta Township, Mich., near Lansing, and Fort Wayne, Ind.

About 2,400 production workers will be recalled as a result of the added shifts.

The Fairfax plant makes the midsize Chevrolet Malibu, Saturn Aura and Buick LaCrosse, while Delta Township makes the GMC Acadia and Saturn Outlook large crossover vehicles. The Fort Wayne factory makes pickup trucks.

GM says in a statement that Fairfax will get all production of the Malibu when the midsize car factory in Orion Township, Mich., closes in November. It will be converted to a small-car plant and reopen in 2010.

Delta Township will get production of the Chevrolet Traverse large crossover when the Spring Hill, Tenn., factory that now makes the vehicles closes in November. That plant will go on standby in case demand increases.

Fort Wayne will add production of heavy-duty versions of the GMC Sierra and Chevrolet Silverado pickups that were being made in Pontiac, Mich. That factory is to close at the end of September, the company said in a statement.

"Today's actions enable GM to add production shifts and maximize the utilization of several of our plants," Tim Lee, group vice president for global manufacturing, said in a statement.

Brian Fredline, president of the United Auto Workers local at the Delta Township plant, said the increase at his factory is not just due to the closure of the Tennessee plant.

"It's because we have increased demand for our product," he said. "We build a world-class vehicle and the marketplace is responding to it."

Workers at the plant, while unhappy that Spring Hill is closing, are happy to get the additional work, Fredline said.

"It creates job and income security for our UAW workers," he said. "Any job and income security in this economic climate is a good thing."

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Between 800 and 1,000 workers will be recalled at the factory, and some may have to come from other areas, Fredline said.

GM plans to move tooling for the Traverse from Spring Hill later this year, and hopes to begin build Traverses, which are similar to the GMC and Saturn crossovers, by January of next year.

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