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Seanna Adcox, Associated Press

COLUMBIA, S.C. (AP) — Bridgestone on Wednesday announced plans to expand its tire plant in Aiken County and add 122 jobs by 2013.

Bridgestone Americas, Inc. plans to invest \$135 million in a 266,000-square-foot expansion at its Graniteville plant off Interstate 20, according to a news release from Gov. Nikki Haley and the Commerce Department.

Plant manager John Stewart said the 13-year-old plant currently employs 932 people directly and contracts with 200 more for warehouse and maintenance services. He said the new skilled jobs will pay well, though he declined to be specific, citing competitive reasons.

It's an economic boost for the entire region because many workers commute from surrounding counties, Stewart said.

Nashville-Tenn.-based Bridgestone expects to start construction later this year, and install equipment in the fall of 2012. Operations should start in spring of 2013.

Stewart says an expansion has been in the works for years, and the increasing demand for tires and the Bridgestone brand made the timing right.

The Commerce Department says no state incentives were involved. The county offered a standard fee-in-lieu-of-taxes deal, said Will Williams, director of the local Economic Development Partnership, who said negotiations have been ongoing for months.

He said the company chose the South Carolina plant over others nationwide.

"We're always talking about acquiring new businesses, but it's the expansion of the existing businesses that makes up much of the economic growth," said Rep. Bill Taylor, R-Aiken, who first alerted reporters to the expansion through social media.

The plant is about 15 miles from the Georgia line.

On Thursday, Haley plans to travel to Bamberg County, where she grew up, to announce new jobs there.

SouthernAlliance Carolina, a regional economic development group, says Haley and local officials will make the announcement in Denmark, at the site of the former NIBCO plant. Marketing director Kay Maxwell characterized the forthcoming news as the biggest jobs announcement in memory in Bamberg County, which has about 16,000 people.

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The NIBCO plant made PVC plumbing fittings, and at one time employed about 200 people. The Times and Democrat of Orangeburg reports that 130 people lost their jobs when it closed in 2007.

Denmark is about 55 miles south of Columbia.

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