New Zinc Plant To Be Built In NC

SPINDALE, N.C. (AP) — A Pennsylvania company that extracts zinc from waste generated through steel mini mills said Monday it will build a new plant in Rutherford County that will generate 250 jobs.

Horsehead Corp. will build a zinc production facility in Rutherford County near Forest City, Gov. Beverly Perdue announced in a news release. The company plans to invest $350 million to develop an operation that will make zinc-based products through recycled materials and utilize what's labeled as a lower-cost, environmentally-friendly technology.

Perdue's office said the overall average salary for the new jobs will be more than $41,000 — above the county's average of about $28,400.

The company said it decided on building in North Carolina because of electric power costs and the incentives provided by state and local government. Horsehead plans to seek state corporate tax incentives for recycling facilities, Perdue's release said.

"We believe this location is ideally located among our four recycling facilities and will be within one-day deliver distance for the majority of our customers," Horsehead President and Chief Executive Officer Jim Hensler said in a statement released through Perdue's office. "We look forward to becoming an important part of the local economy, providing construction jobs over the next two years and manufacturing jobs thereafter."

Lt. Gov. Walter Dalton, who is from Rutherford County, called the plant good news for a region harmed by the loss of manufacturing jobs. The plant will also be able to remove metals such as silver, copper and lead from recycled materials, Horsehead said in a news release.

Company officials said Monday an existing smelter in Monaca, Pa., which employs about 600 people, will continue to operate until the new plant is finished in late 2013. Horsehead said it plans to continue non-smelter operations at the site about 25 miles northwest of Pittsburgh and is "exploring alternative uses for the facility."

In 2006, Pennsylvania officials fined Horsehead $110,000 by for air pollution violations at the Monaca plant, and last year two workers died in an explosion there.

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