

BMW To Add 300 Jobs With \$900M Investment

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COLUMBIA, S.C. (AP) — BMW said Thursday it will add 300 new jobs at its South Carolina plant and make a \$900 million investment to expand the factory over the next three years, continuing a recent trend of automakers boosting their U.S. operations to help meet growing global demand.

Officials for the German automaker said the move will boost production at the plant, BMW's only one in the United States, to at least 300,000 cars this year from 276,065 in 2011 and include the introduction of its new X4 crossover.

"This site is an essential pillar of our international production," said Frank-Peter Arndt, BMW's board member responsible for production, speaking during a webcast of the celebration.

BMW has invested \$6 billion at the plant since it opened in 1994. It was the German automaker's first full manufacturing site outside of Germany.

Arndt said the expansion is a response to rising demand worldwide for its X series four-wheel-drive vehicles. The plant will have 7,500 employees by the end of the year and be able to produce up to 350,000 vehicles by 2014.

The plant has expanded four times and produced six different BMW models including a version of the top-selling 3 Series sedan, the Z3 and Z4 roadsters, and three different X series models. Arndt said the plant produced 73 percent more vehicles in 2011 than the year before, and 70 percent were exported.

Thursday's announcement follows a trend of domestic and foreign automakers increasing their U.S. production capacity and hiring more workers to meet higher U.S. demand.

— Also on Thursday, fellow German automaker Daimler AG said its commercial truck division will add 1,200 jobs at two facilities in North Carolina. Most will staff a new second shift at its truck plant in Cleveland, N.C. Another 100 jobs are to open at a logistics center in Gastonia, N.C. The Cleveland plant, one of Daimler's largest in North America, produces heavy-duty trucks under the Freightliner, Cascadia, Columbia and Argosy product lines.

— Chrysler said earlier this month that it will add 1,250 jobs at two Detroit factories next year to help build a Jeep Grand Cherokee diesel model and make a Street Racing Team version of the Dodge Viper muscle car.

— General Motors said in November that it will begin building its Chevrolet Equinox at its idled Spring Hill, Tenn. plant this year and make a mid-sized vehicle there in the future. The initial \$61 million investment will create nearly 700 jobs and the

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subsequent \$183 million investment in the unnamed midsized vehicle will create another 1,200, GM said.

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