

Chrysler To Add 1,250 Jobs At Detroit Factories

Corey Williams, Associated Press

DETROIT (AP) — Chrysler will add 1,250 jobs at two Detroit factories next year — another sign that the once struggling automaker appears to be making a comeback.

The Jefferson North Assembly Plant will get 1,100 new workers and a third shift to help build a Jeep Grand Cherokee diesel model for North America. Another 150 workers will be added when Chrysler reopens the Conner Avenue factory to make a Street Racing Team version of the Dodge Viper muscle car.

"Our future, like the history of our brands, is interwoven with the City of Detroit," Chrysler Group Chairman and CEO Sergio Marchionne said Thursday in a statement. "We believe that investing in Detroit is not only the right thing to do, but it is a smart thing to do as we work to write the next chapter in our shared history."

Chrysler has been using gritty images of Detroit in advertising that highlights its resurgence from a 2009 trip through bankruptcy protection.

Each of the 1,250 new jobs will be filled by new hires. The third crew at the Jefferson plant will start early next year. The Conner Avenue factory reopens later this year.

"Our workers nationwide have had a rough couple of years along with the American auto industry and we are proud to be partners in building a future of success starting right here in Detroit," said United Auto Workers Vice President General Holiefield, who last year led the union's contract negotiations with Chrysler.

Detroit could use an infusion of new jobs.

In a financial and operational restructuring plan update presented Thursday to the Detroit City Council, Mayor Dave Bing's office pegged the city's official unemployment rate at about 24 percent. That's for people actively looking for work, said Kirk Lewis, chief of Governmental and Corporate Affairs.

"It could be as high as 40 percent of our citizens who don't have jobs," Lewis told reporters at a morning briefing.

A state-appointed review team is looking into Detroit's finances — a step in a process that could lead to Michigan taking over the city's government. A preliminary review determined there was "probable financial stress" in city government and that Detroit faces a general fund deficit of about \$200 million.

A thousand city jobs will be cut in the coming weeks to save about \$14 million.

Healthy domestic automakers could help fill the jobs vacuum.

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Detroit and its suburbs are home to a number of car and truck plants owned by Chrysler, General Motors Co. and Ford Motor Co.

U.S. auto sales have risen for two years after dropping to 30-year lows in 2009, and they're expected to grow again this year. Interest rates are low. There are strong new products on the market, from small electric cars to luxury sedans. And automakers are turning profits again, nearly healed from the damage wrought by the 2009 bankruptcies and last year's Japanese earthquake.

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