Caterpillar To Build Plant In Georgia

Jeff Martin, The Associated Press

ATLANTA (AP) — Caterpillar plans to build a new manufacturing facility in Georgia, bringing an estimated 1,400 jobs to the state, an official familiar with the project told The Associated Press on Friday.

The plant will be built in the Athens area, said the official, who requested anonymity because a formal announcement has not been made.

Georgia Gov. Nathan Deal has scheduled a 10 a.m. news conference for what he described as a major jobs announcement.

The governor's office and the Peoria, Ill.-based company did not immediately respond to requests for comment.

In November, Caterpillar announced plans to shift production from Japan and open a new manufacturing facility in North America to produce small tractors and excavators. The company said its goal was to move production of the equipment closer to its customers in North America and Europe.

"Producing these machines at a North American location will put us in the best possible position to serve our customers in the building construction industry," Mary Bell, vice president of Caterpillar's Building Construction Products division, said when plans for the facility were described in November.

North Carolina lawmakers say their state was also being considered for the new plant, and they had hoped Caterpillar would choose an industrial park near the Port of Wilmington.

"Caterpillar is a global company and they need a strong port," said North Carolina state Rep. Dewey Hill.

Hill said Friday he's disappointed the plant appears headed to Georgia. He said "we've lost plant after plant" to other states.

"I can tell you we probably need to go back and take a look at our whole process in North Carolina," Hill said. "I think we need to take a look at our infrastructure and our tax system."

Work at the new plant will include major fabrications, paint and final assembly, the company said in November.

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