Navistar To Build New Work Truck In AL

The Associated Press

BARTON, Ala. (AP) — Navistar International Corp. will assemble its new work truck at a plant in northwest Alabama, with production starting in early 2013.

The company showed off the International LoadStar truck at a trucking show in Louisville, Ky., on March 21 and then announced production will be at a plant the company leased in Colbert County, Ala. The company said it plans to start taking orders for the truck in October.

Navistar spokesman Steve Schrier said the waste industry will likely have the most use of the truck, but other uses include concrete pumping and airplane refueling. He said the total market for similar trucks in the United States and Canada is 5,000 to 8,000 vehicles per year.

The company plans to offer diesel and natural-gas powered engines for the truck, with the diesel engines manufactured at the company's engine plant in Huntsville. Navistar employs 800 people in Huntsville.

Navistar isn't saying yet how many employees it will hire at the old National Alabama rail car plant. Navistar now has 185 workers at the site.

The plant in the Barton Riverfront Industrial Park, about 10 miles west of Muscle Shoals, is nearly a mile long. It was started by National Railcar of Canada before the recession hit. Then it was taken over by the Retirement Systems of Alabama, which had invested more than $600 million, in the project. The state pension system worked out a deal late last year for Navistar International to lease the plant.

When the deal was announced, Gov. Robert Bentley said it could lead to as many as 2,200 jobs over the next four years.

Navistar official told the TimesDaily that other truck products will be built in Barton, but company spokesman Jim Spangler said there is no timetable for an announcement.

Bill Taylor, chief executive of the Economic Development Partnership of Alabama, said the truck assembly plant will extend the state's growing automotive industry to a part of Alabama where it had not been present, and it is "a clear indication Navistar is going to be doing more in the state."

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