AK Plant Marks Expansion, Job Creation

The Associated Press

PRESCOTT, Ark. (AP) — A factory in Prescott that makes roofing materials marked the opening Monday of its $36 million expansion and addition of 100 new jobs.

Firestone Building Products Co. consolidated work from a plant at Kingtree, S.C., with its modernized factory in Prescott. The company has operated the Prescott plant for more than 40 years and it specializes in producing a type of synthetic rubber roof covering known as EPDM, or ethylene propylene diene monomer.

The factory had about 400 workers prior to the expansion, which added 52,500 square feet to the plant and updated equipment to help it save on energy costs and reduce waste.

Gov. Mike Beebe was on hand for the ceremony, as was U.S. Rep. Mike Ross, who is from Prescott.

"Firestone's decision to stay and expand in Prescott is an investment not only in Arkansas, but in the dedicated workforce that has brought them success here," Beebe said. "We thank Firestone for believing in southwest Arkansas, and wish them continued prosperity in this expanded facility."

To help keep the plant in Arkansas, Beebe kicked in $1.25 million from his Quick Action Closing Fund, and the company used the money for site improvements and to relocate equipment. Firestone also qualifies for a cash rebate equal to 5 percent of its payroll for five years and a state sales tax credit of 6.5 percent for the company's overall investment.

Also Monday, the company marked 1 million hours logged by plant employees without a lost-time accident.

"Since 1984, quality EPDM roofing material has been manufactured in Prescott, the largest EPDM manufacturing plant in the world," said Tim Dunn, the company's president. "With the expansion project and the investment we have made in equipment refinements and additions, Firestone is well positioned to supply our customers with superior roofing products for their future construction needs."

Indianapolis-based Firestone Building Products produces a range of building products.

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