

Toyota Marks A Year At Mississippi Assembly Plant

Jeff Amy, Associated Press

BLUE SPRINGS, Miss. (AP) — Once every 85 seconds, or about 600 times a day, a newly assembled Toyota Corolla pulls away from the end of the assembly line in Union County.

That's the best proof, Toyota officials say, that they're achieving their goals at the north Mississippi plant, which marks its first anniversary this week.

The automaker showed off the plant to reporters Thursday, emphasizing innovative and environmentally-friendly features that include efforts to make vehicle assembly simpler and safer for workers.

After a delay because of the worldwide recession, the \$800 million plant opened last year. Now it's turned out more than 100,000 small Corolla sedans. The plant has hired 2,000 workers and reached its full production rate. It could grow to make 200,000 vehicles a year, though Toyota says there are no expansion plans now.

Mississippi officials gave Toyota about \$300 million worth of incentives to lure the Japanese automaker to the site west of Tupelo.

After a long pause, Toyota sprinted into production last year, finishing the building, installing equipment and training workers at the same time. "We had the fastest startup in the history of the company in North America," said David Copenhagen, the plant's vice president of administration.

That meant workers had to be trained on static equipment, while some were sent to plants in Georgetown, Ky., and Cambridge, Ontario. Despite those measures, Copenhagen said the plant has accelerated production smoothly.

Workers put 2,385 parts into each Corolla. Some of those parts come from 11 Mississippi suppliers. Overall, Toyota vehicles made in North America now have 75 percent of their parts made here, a new high.

The Blue Springs plant is Toyota's model location in North America for environmental friendliness. The plant has geothermal and solar systems to reduce carbon dioxide emissions, and the company plans to replant all the trees that were cut down on the site.

The plant also used what Toyota calls a "blue sky" approach, trying to avoid hanging major items from the roof as is common in other assembly plants. That means the building structure doesn't have to be as heavy, but also allows employees to see vehicles and each other more clearly. Cars are lofted on pedestals

Toyota Marks A Year At Mississippi Assembly Plant

Published on Industrial Maintenance & Plant Operation (<http://www.impomag.com>)

and twisted sideways to allow the installation of engines, axles, exhaust systems and other underneath components. Managers say the sideways turn cuts the number of steps that employees have to take, and cuts the space needed for those assembly tasks.

Source URL (retrieved on 04/21/2015 - 9:45am):

<http://www.impomag.com/news/2012/10/toyota-marks-year-mississippi-assembly-plant>