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## **Ford Adding 2,000 Workers To MO Plant**

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DETROIT (AP) — Ford Motor Co. said Thursday that it's adding 2,000 workers to the Missouri plant that makes the F-150 pickup because of surging U.S. truck demand.

The company plans to add a shift with 900 workers in the third quarter of this year to make pickups. That's in addition to the 1,100 workers Ford will hire to make the new Transit van. Those workers will start in the fourth quarter.

The plant, which is just outside Kansas City in Claycomo, Mo., already has 2,450 workers on two shifts. The company wouldn't say how many trucks it makes each year at the 4.7 million-square-foot plant. Ford made 800,000 F-Series trucks at three plants last year.

Ford's pickup sales have risen 19 percent so far this year as home builders and other construction workers replace the trucks they held onto during the recession. The F-Series is the best-selling vehicle in the U.S., with more than 228,000 sold through April.

Joe Hinrichs, Ford's president of the Americas, said the third shift is needed at Claycomo because full-size pickup sales are growing three times faster than the total U.S. auto market.

"We believe this is going to continue or we wouldn't put the third crew on," Hinrichs told The Associated Press in an interview.

With the added workers, both of Ford's F-150 factories, in Claycomo and Dearborn, Mich., will be on the maximum of three shifts. Its Kentucky Truck Plant in Louisville, which makes heavy duty pickups, is running two.

But Hinrichs doesn't foresee building any new factories soon. Ford started closing factories several years ago in an effort to match supply to sales. That has kept costs low and resulted in strong profits, so Ford would be reluctant to add space, he said.

"Our plants are pretty full, but we have more upside if we need it," said Hinrichs, who at one time headed Ford's manufacturing operations.

Ford will fill about 1,000 of the Claycomo jobs with workers laid off when the plant stopped producing Escape SUVs last year. There will be around 1,000 new hires, Hinrichs said.

Hinrichs said companies that make parts for the F-150 are being asked to increase production, so those companies could need more workers as well.

Jesse Toprak, a senior analyst with the car pricing site TrueCar.com, said he thinks

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truck sales will continue to grow this year. The pickups now on the road have reached a record average age of 11 years, and are expensive to maintain, he said.

The growth in truck sales shows underlying strength in the economy, he said, since small businesses won't buy them unless they're confident in the future. It's also good news for automakers, since pickups are some of their most profitable vehicles.

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