

Ford Adding 350 Jobs At Ky. Truck Plant

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The Associated Press

LOUISVILLE, Ky. (AP) -- Ford Motor Co. said Thursday it plans to invest \$80 million in its Kentucky truck plant to churn out more F-Series Super Duty trucks. The ramped-up production will add 350 jobs, the automaker said.

The investment will boost production capacity by 15 percent, or about 55,000 units, as the company retools and upgrades the plant, Ford said. Improvements are planned in the body and paint shops, it said.

"This is a sizable leap forward in capacity," said Joe Hinrichs, Ford's president of the Americas.

Ford said the increased plant capacity is needed to keep pace with strong demand for the popular truck line. Truck sales are a good gauge of the broader economy's health, Hinrichs said.

"This is really a testament to the underlying strength of the U.S. economy and demand for our industry-leading F-Series trucks," he said.

The truck plant, which opened in 1969, employs about 4,000 people. The plant produces F-250, F-350, F-450 and F-550 Super Duty pickups, as well as the Ford Expedition and Lincoln Navigator.

With the increased production in 2014, the plant will build the 5 millionth Ford F-Series Super Duty truck, the company said. The truck was introduced in 1999.

The 350 new workers were chosen from a large pool of temporary Ford workers who helped maintain production levels during summer vacations for permanent workers, Hinrichs said. All 350 have been hired and will be on the job by April 1, he said.

The new hires will start at the entry-level salary of \$15.78 per hour, the company said.

The investment is Ford's latest in Louisville, where the automaker has two production plants. The plants have a combined workforce of about 8,500 hourly and salaried employees.

The Ford F-Series topped 750,000 in sales last year, with an uptick in December when more than 70,000 trucks were sold after eight straight months of sales above 60,000 vehicles, the company said.

"I'm looking forward to seeing even more Kentucky-made Ford F-Series pickups on the roads, and more Kentuckians back to work as a result of this investment," Kentucky Gov. Steve Beshear said.

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Kentucky has become the nation's third-leading auto-producing state, behind only Michigan and Ohio, according to Beshear.

Toyota has a large production plant at Georgetown, Ky., and General Motors makes its iconic Corvettes at a plant in Bowling Green, Ky.

United Auto Workers vice president Jimmy Settles said the investment at the Ford truck plant was a tribute to the workers.

"We know the impact these jobs will have on the local community," he said. "It's especially rewarding to know these jobs come as a result of customer demand."

The truck plant investment is Ford's latest expansion of its operations in Kentucky, where the automaker first started making vehicles in 1913 with 11 employees.

Across town, Ford invested \$600 million in recent years to revamp its Louisville Assembly Plant, home of the Escape. The plant also will start building the Lincoln MKC this summer.

The plant overhaul included new body, paint and trim assembly lines.

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