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ZF celebrates its 3rd facility in Gainesville area

Company's new site will make truck clutches, powertrain components



Employees, executives and local business leaders talk Wednesday morning while waiting for grand opening ceremonies to begin at ZF Gainesville's newest facility, its GNS 3 plant on Rafe Banks Drive in Oakwood.

ZF celebrated the opening of its third facility in the Gainesville area on Wednesday.

The newest plant, located in Oakwood Industrial Park, will serve as a manufacturing site for clutches and other powertrain components for midsized and heavy trucks, helping the company localize production in the United States.

The new Oakwood plant brings the number of ZF's North American production sites to 22, including 16 sites in the U.S., three located in Gainesville. The remaining six are in Mexico.

The North American market contributes to 18 percent of ZF's sales, which have since increased by 48

percent in 2012.

Philip Lindenstruth, director of operations for ZF Gainesville LLC, said during his opening speech that employees are proof of the support that the company has gotten from the community. The company, which first moved operations to Gainesville nearly 30 years ago, now employs 550 workers in its three local facilities.

"This new facility is a strong indicator of ZF's ever-expanding presence in the U.S. market and serves as a cornerstone to our business unit's future growth," said Franz-Josef Armbruster, head of the Commercial Vehicle, Powertrain Modules Unit, ZF Friedrichshafen AG.

According to Armbruster, the move of the clutch and powertrain lines will allow the company's sites in Mexico to be available for other uses.

Julio Caspari, ZF North America Inc.'s president, credits employees for bringing the production lines of the former Mexican operation on line so quickly.

"We have great people here. We have been extremely welcomed," Caspari said.

“In recent years, we have celebrated ZF being named Industry of the Year for both Hall County and the state of Georgia,” said Tim Evans, vice president of economic development with the Greater Hall Chamber of Commerce. “Any day we can celebrate new jobs and an investment in Hall County is a great day.”