
New Michelin expansion reflects major investment in Lexington County

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Sen. Lindsey Graham, Michelin North America Chairman/President Pete Selleck, and Gov. Nikki Haley at the Michelin expansion announcement in Greenville. Photo courtesy Michelin North America

Tuesday's announcement about Michelin North America's expansion in Lexington County has local business and government officials crowing. The State paper reported that besides building a new \$550 million plant in Anderson County, the tire manufacturer plans to spend \$200 million to expand its Lexington County operation and hire 125 people locally.

"It is a great day in Lexington County," said a jubilant Bill Banning, chairman of Lexington County Council. "The \$200 million investment is huge and the jobs are huge. It shows Michelin is committed to the Midlands."

Michelin has been showing its Lexington commitment since building here in 1981. Last May the company announced it would invest \$200 million and hire 270 workers. More than 2,000 people will be employed there when both expansions are complete, Banning said, adding that he and others have been working to expedite the new expansion since October.

"The compounding factors are phenomenal," Banning said. "We'll see more payroll. It's going to drive everything."

One of the Greater Lexington Chamber's Blockbuster Partners, Michelin has two plants at its Two Notch Road site. One plant makes passenger car tires and the other makes 5-ton Earthmover tires, which are used for construction sites, mines, and quarries.

Lexington's Earthmover plant is celebrating its 15th year, says Bryan Dunlap, its manager. "This is the fifth phase of an expansion that started in 2006," he said, noting the Earthmover market has grown 20 percent between 2009 and 2011. "There's an unprecedented demand for Michelin Earthmover tires throughout the world. Nearly every tire is sold before it's produced."

Founded in France with operations across the globe, Michelin North America is headquartered in Greenville. The Anderson County plant is in the town of Starr.

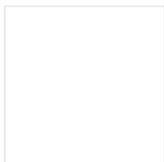
"A real key is Pete Selleck," Banning said of the company's chairman and president. "He's from South Carolina and is going to be a real asset to us. He's a 30-year Michelin employee, not some new kid on the block. He knows about community involvement. He is really committed to Michelin having a bigger presence in our community."

Banning said he, Randy Halfacre and Ike McLeese, presidents of the Lexington and Columbia Chambers

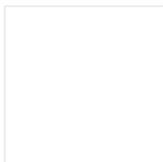
respectively, plan to invite Selleck to address their organizations in the near future.

“Michelin’s most recent investment is a testimony of Lexington County Council’s ongoing efforts to create economic prosperity for the citizens of Lexington County and the Midstate region,” Halfacre said. “It also speaks volumes for the cooperation and partnerships that have been established between local governments, communities, and business sectors. I hope everyone realizes that this is just ‘downright good stuff, y’all!’”

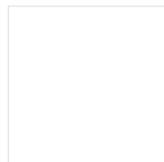
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