



ON A ROLL: Michelin makes big tire print in S.C.



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LEXINGTON — Bucking against the weight of its load, the tractor-trailer pulling out of the Michelin Lexington Manufacturing site is nearly dwarfed by the two massive Earthmover tires it's hauling.

Twelve feet tall, 5 feet wide, the rugged tires resemble elaborately carved chocolate doughnuts standing upright in the open trailer. From the company's Earthmover production line in Lexington County, the tires are likely destined for a remote mining operation in Canada or perhaps a quarry in China.

The Lexington Earthmover plant, known as US7, is one of seven Michelin Earthmover production facilities worldwide. The company also manufactures Earthmover tires in Canada, Brazil,

France, Spain and Romania.

Earlier this year, Greenville-based Michelin North America announced plans to expand its Earthmover tire manufacturing operation in Lexington. In addition, the company is building a new Earthmover tire plant in southern Anderson County. The two projects represent a \$750 million investment and will create more than 500 new jobs.

Demand for Michelin's Earthmover tires has risen sharply in recent years despite the volatility in the world economy. The market grew by more than 20 percent between 2009 and 2011, according to Rich Kornacki, Michelin executive vice president and chief operating officer of specialty tire product lines.

"There is tremendous demand for ore, minerals and energy-related products worldwide as emerging countries, led by China, continue to develop their infrastructure," Kornacki said. "Almost every Earthmover tire is sold before it's produced. We believe demand will continue to grow and the expansion of our Lexington facility and the addition of the new plant in Anderson County will put us in position to produce the products our customers need."

Michelin is one of only a few companies in the world capable of manufacturing the high-technology tires required for the earthmoving equipment used in mining, quarrying and heavy construction. The company introduced the first radial Earthmover tire for dump trucks in 1959. Today, the largest Earthmover tire can weigh up to 5 tons and is comprised of 7,600 pounds of rubber products and 2,800 pounds of steel.

Michelin is challenged to produce tires that perform safely and efficiently under extremely harsh conditions. The company's testing center in Almeria, Spain is the only such facility in the world dedicated to earthmover tires. The proving ground consists of 50 miles of track. Michelin

