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Richmond County Daily Journal (Rockingham, NC)

O-I plans \$10M expansion

Julie Peacock/Richmond County Daily Journal
Published: June 19, 2007

Owens-Illinois Inc.'s Hamlet facility will add three new product lines and 12 employees during a \$10 million expansion planned for this fall. The company announced the expansion Monday .

The new lines will be for the production soft drink beverage closures, Human Resource Manager Gene Escolas said. The plant is already interviewing employees for the positions and plans to have them in place by November or December for training, Escolas said.

The Hamlet facility manufactures carbonated soft drink closures. The expansion will allow the facility to increase yearly output by 1.3 billion closures.

"The high levels of plant performance combined with geographic location are two key reasons for selecting the Hamlet plant to handle the increased demand for carbonated soft drink closures," Plant Manager Mike Wenerd said.

The plant last announced an expansion in April 2006 when it added 24 employees with a \$10 million expansion.

"It is always good news when we make an industrial announcement, but an announcement that an existing industry is continuing their commitment to Richmond County through growth is even better news," said Kenneth Robinette, Richmond County Commission chairman.

"We are excited about the continued growth. They have a wonderful facility and do a great job of recruiting locally through multiple job fairs per year. It is great news and we welcome the continued commitment to Richmond County," County Commissioner Pam Dillman said.

Richmond County Manager Jim Haynes agreed. "We are happy to see industries already located in the county continue to do well and grow. Too many times, we don't recognize growth from within as economic development when in fact, it is a sure sign that the business health of the county is good and improving."

It is a good thing to see an existing company not only keeping

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jobs but expanding, said Rick Sago, Richmond County Economic Development director.

The Hamlet facility began production in 1983 and employs 197 people.

Last week Rexam announced it entered into a conditional agreement with O-I to purchase O-I Plastic Products, which includes the Hamlet facility.

Escolas said he did not believe the purchase would affect the expansion. "(From) everything I've heard it's a go."

"It's good news. Not only has the company decided to buy the operation but to allow expansion to go on at the same time," Sago said.

The sale is expected to be finalized during the third quarter of 2007.

Richmond County along with the Department of Commerce, Richmond Community College and Progress Energy assisted with the expansion.

Contact reporter Julie Peacock at 997-3111, ext. 32; e-mail: jpeacock@yourdailyjournal.com

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