



A rendering of GKN's new regional headquarters in Auburn Hills.

Former AH Movie Complex To Be GKN Headquarters

GKN Driveline and GKN Sinter Metals are expanding their automotive operations and moving to a new regional headquarters for the Americas in Auburn Hills early next year.

The new site will also house employees from GKN's Land Systems and North American Services groups. Construction of the 168,000-square-foot facility is scheduled to begin this month on an 11.2-acre site at 2150 N. Opdyke Road, the location of a now-vacant Showcase Cinema complex, said Darren Greene, Marketing manager at GKN's North America office.

Headquartered in Auburn Hills since 1986, GKN has more than 300 employees at its current 113,000-square-foot facility at 3300 University Drive. Employment is expected to grow by 50 or more full-time employees in the next three years, Greene said.

"We like being in Auburn Hills," Greene said. "It's centrally located between the Big Three automakers and we have a good relationship with the city's local government."

GKN Driveline is the world's leading producer of automotive driveline components and systems including constant-velocity-joint, all-wheel-drive, transaxle and electric-drive systems. GKN Sinter Metals is the world's largest producer of precision powder-metal products, Greene said.

GKN's new headquarters complex will provide additional space for state-of-the-art testing and validation equipment along with additional engineering design areas for driveline and sinter metal products, Greene said. Executive management teams from both GKN Driveline and GKN Sinter Metals will be located in the new headquarters building along with various engineering groups and other corporate activities.

The company's production facilities will be located elsewhere – in Wisconsin, Pennsylvania, Canada and North Carolina, Greene said.

Robert Willig, president of GKN Driveline Americas, noted that the need for additional space and resources has become paramount in view of GKN's substantial growth in recent years and the number of major new program launches planned for the Americas.

"GKN has significantly increased its engineering resources in the past four years and plans to recruit and hire even more engineering personnel to support more than 100 new program launches in the next three years for GKN Driveline and GKN Sinter Metals," Willig said. "Our new headquarters facility underlines our commitment to our customers and to the Americas."

"The increase in demand for our technology-leading driveline systems made it essential for us to find a suitable facility to support projected growth and better serve our customers."

Chris Franks, president, GKN Sinter Metals Americas, added: "The additional space is ideally located in close proximity to many of our global customers and will give us access to the additional resources needed to provide our customers with world-class precision powder-metal products and allow us to deliver on our corporate vision of providing 'Engineering That Moves The World.'"

Greene said GKN received "tremendous support" for the project by Michigan Governor Rick Snyder's office, the Michigan Economic Development Corporation and the City of Auburn Hills. Company officials expect to break ground on the project by the end of August. The building should be finished by the first half of 2014.

Ford's Focus is Taking Care of Employees

Ford is taking environmental sustainability a step further through an initiative called Sustainable Workforce meant to ensure the long-term health, efficiency and productivity of the company's most important asset – its people.

"Ford could not exist without all of our hard-working employees, so it's important for us to do everything in our power to provide a safe and sustainable work environment," said Jim Tetreault, vice president, Ford North America Manufacturing.

Speaking last week at the Center for Automotive Research Management Briefing Seminars, he said, "Through our Sustainable Workforce initiative, we're taking a new, holistic approach to fostering growth and well-being amongst our workers, and making sure Ford is a great place to build a career over the long term."

The goal of Sustainable Workforce is to keep hourly employees healthy and safe throughout their careers with Ford – from before their first day on the job through their retirement. The initiative focuses on four components: high-performance hiring, advanced training, protection and safety, and health and well-being for life, Tetreault said.

Selecting the right candidates for open hourly positions can be challenging, said Tetreault, given the ratio of job applicants to open positions – nearly 30 to 1. To narrow the field, Ford's Human Resources team determines which candidates are likely to be high performers based on a comprehensive test that looks at skills, abilities and motivation, Tetreault said.

"We look at what candidates can do as well as what they will do," said Tetreault. "Factors associated with motivation – work ethic, conscientiousness and

teamwork – are just as important in an effective employee as skills and abilities such as reading, arithmetic, defect spotting and manual assembly. Looking at candidates from both perspectives allows us to better select potential high performers who we want working with us."

After strategic hiring, training is crucial to ensure new hourly employees are prepared to work safely and efficiently. Base operators receive several weeks of training – a combination of classroom, simulated factory and hands-on factory work. Semi-skilled operators receive up to six months of training, and skilled trades training has increased to more than six months, or up to nine months prior to a model launch, Tetreault said.

Simulated factory training, which was developed at Ford's Louisville Assembly Plant in Kentucky, has expanded to Flat Rock Assembly Plant in Michigan in preparation for the start of Ford Fusion production.

"This training process – which provides workers with hands-on training in a real-world work environment – has been so successful that it is now considered a global standard and is being implemented in our plants worldwide," said Tetreault.

In 1999, Ford revamped its safety program to create global safety process standards. Employees must "stop, think and plan" before taking on any task – whether it's replacing a light bulb or a production task on the assembly line, Tetreault said.

"By having our employees analyze the task before any work begins, we are able to better prevent safety incidents in our facilities," said Tetreault. "Overall injury rates have dropped to one-tenth of the levels of 1999, and our lost-time case rate is just a

fraction of what it was in 2000."

To identify ergonomic issues early and reduce the risk of chronic repetitive motion injuries, Ford conducts virtual ergonomic assessments in its virtual factory. Resolving issues before the production of physical parts plays a significant role in keeping employees safe in the workplace, Tetreault said.

"Since implementation of our virtual factory," he added, "the number of ergonomic issues during physical builds has been greatly reduced. So far in 2013, our days away and restricted time rate has fallen to less than one-sixth of where it was in 2001, and we continue to make progress."

Ensuring employees' long-term health is the final step in maintaining a sustainable workforce. To improve the health care experience and outcome for hourly employees with the greatest need, Ford recently announced its Enhanced Care Program in conjunction with the UAW and UAW Trust.

This voluntary two-year pilot program uses a personalized care approach to help eligible participants manage chronic health care needs and prevent future problems when possible, Tetreault said.

"Our hourly worker population tends to be more high-risk, to have more chronic conditions like asthma and diabetes, and to use preventive services less often compared with the national average," said Tetreault.

"As health care spending continues to increase, Ford, the UAW and health care providers continue to work together to develop and promote programs that will maintain or improve employees' health while reducing costs at the same time. We think the goal is imminently achievable."

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