

Kia details hiring plans

Most hourly job applications will be taken online

By Joel Martin Senior writer

Kia Motors plans to start accepting job applications for the West Point plant later this month or in early October, Human Resources Director Randy Jackson said Thursday.

Jackson, speaking to the West Point Rotary Club, said a date will be announced when prospective hourly employees can fill out a job application online at kiajobsingorgia.com. Those who don't have access to the Internet will go to the Georgia Department of Labor field office in LaGrange.

Salaried workers are being recruited with the help of JC Malone Associates of Louisville, Ky. (502-456-2380), which plans to open an office in LaGrange soon, and Management Recruiters of Auburn-Opelika (334-749-4941, jobs@mrauburn.com to submit a resume).

"We're interviewing now for certain salaried positions," Jackson said. "Key jobs will need extensive automotive experience."

Kia plans to hire about 2,500 people for the estimated \$1 billion plant, scheduled to start production in November 2009. Another 2,000 or so jobs are expected from suppliers and 10,000 more from the economic spin-off, he said..

Jackson said Kia - the world's sixth leading and fastest-growing automaker - wants employees "who are never satisfied with the current result."

"It's like running a race without a finish line, but that's the auto industry," he said. "We want people who want to learn and develop themselves ... people who have a can do attitude. We don't want people who say they can't do something. Get 'can't' out of the vocabulary."

Wages have to be competitive, he said, and probably will be in the range of \$50,000 for the total package. He said the plant will have two eight-hour shifts and couldn't run 24 hours a day because there would be no time to maintain equipment.

Jackson said the 28.3 million square-foot plant will be the largest project in state history and "I didn't realize that myself" until he was told by state House Speaker Glenn Richardson and Labor Commissioner Michael Thurmond during recent visits here.

Construction workers are about 35 to 40 percent finished with drilling 5,000 pilings, which will be filled underground with cement to support the 650-acre foundation.

Hundreds of robots will be used in production, which starts with large rolls of metal that are stamped into various parts, such as doors, hoods and trunks. They're welded together and the frame goes to the paint shop. The chassis and engine are added, then the seats,

windshields, radio and other parts. The cars go through a shower test to check for any leaks, then driven on a test track as a final quality check.

The estimated 300,000 cars produced each year will be shipped by rail or truck to dealerships throughout the U.S., with about 10 to 12 percent going to other countries. What models will be produced hasn't been determined.

The air-conditioned plant will have a cafeteria, along with a medical facility staffed with doctors and nurses.

“We'll be almost self-sufficient,” Jackson said. “Everything we need will be at our back door. We'll pretty much be a self-sufficient little city.”