

## \$1.6 million lures 200 jobs

Narricot plans air bag plant

**JONATHAN B. COX, Staff Writer**

An air bag manufacturer said Thursday that it will expand to Richmond County, creating 200 jobs, after the state promised as much as \$1.6 million in grants.

Narricot Industries of Southampton, Pa., expects to invest as much as \$35 million by 2010 on the operation in Cordova.

At the planned facility, about 100 miles southwest of Raleigh, Narricot will make air bags used to protect vehicles' passengers during side collisions. Its products use nonwoven fabrics and wind up in autos made by General Motors, Nissan and Toyota.

The company is a good example of manufacturing "that does make sense in today's environment," Commerce Secretary Jim Fain said after approving one of the grants for Narricot.

The state has lost thousands of traditional manufacturing jobs to companies that operate more cheaply overseas. Officials have tried to replace them with positions that require more advanced skills and are less likely to move offshore.





North Carolina competed with South Hill, Va. -- where Narricot already has a plant -- and a site in South Carolina to get the expansion. It chose Richmond County because of the available work force, said Narricot's president, Frank Goehring. "What you need is a real good skilled labor force who can operate these machines," he said.

The jobs are expected to pay average wages of \$28,980 a year, which is above the county's average of about \$25,000 a year.

Narricot plans to occupy space in a plant owned by International Textile Group, the company formed by the combination of Cone Mills and Burlington Industries. Investor Wilbur L. Ross owns ITG and Narricot.

Narricot will get as much as \$200,000 from the governor's One North Carolina fund, which local officials must match.

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It also will receive as much as \$1.37 million as part of a Job Development Investment Grant. To receive the full benefit of that nine-year grant, it must create at least 180 jobs and pay average annual wages of at least \$26,082.

Staff writer Jonathan B. Cox can be reached at (919) 836-4948 or [jcox@newsobserver.com](mailto:jcox@newsobserver.com).

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