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DuPont snips ribbon for Fayetteville plant expansion



Staff photo by Andrew Craft

Gov. Bev Perdue, center, tours the new plant at DuPont's Fayetteville Works site on Wednesday.

By Catherine Pritchard
Staff writer

The sun shone brightly Wednesday as Gov. Bev Perdue and others celebrated a new DuPont plant that seeks to capitalize on the burgeoning solar-energy business.

"This is a red-letter day for North Carolina," Perdue said to about 150 people gathered under a tent at the company's site on the



border of Bladen and
Cumberland counties.

"DuPont is putting down a marker right at the Bladen-Cumberland plant that they understand the time is right for DuPont to go green," the governor said. "And in this new economy, green is gold for North Carolina."

The plant makes a powdery polymer that's converted elsewhere into Tedlar, a durable plastic film that has been used in a variety of commercial applications for nearly five decades.

One of its uses is now a hot business in a world concerned about supplies of fossil fuels and the consequences of using them - photovoltaics, or the conversion of solar energy into electricity. Tedlar is used to provide a durable weatherproof lining on the back of solar panels.

DuPont, which has several products used in photovoltaics, expects that business to account for more than \$1 billion of its sales in 2011 and \$2 billion by 2014. In the second quarter of this year, the company said, its photovoltaic sales rose 150 percent.

To ride that wave, the company is spending \$295 million to expand its Tedlar production. About \$55 million is being spent in Fayetteville and the rest in Louisville, Ky., where a plant makes the monomer that's the first step in the process, and in Circleville, Ohio, where a plant will turn the polymer from Fayetteville into the film.

A plant in Buffalo also makes the polymer that's produced in Fayetteville.

10 jobs added

The new plant brought 10 permanent jobs to DuPont's Fayetteville Works campus. The company employs another 450 permanent employees and 265 contractors in full-time jobs at other manufacturing operations at the site.

Perdue said the Tedlar plant is an example of the sort of green technology that's important for North Carolina's economy, and she urged DuPont leaders to consider expanding further on the 2,200 acres it owns at Fayetteville Works and at its other sites in the state.

She said she'd told a DuPont executive who lives in Raleigh that "we want more jobs in North Carolina."

That executive, Dave Miller, who is president of DuPont Electronics and Communications, said the company wants that, too.

"We certainly hope to continue to invest here," he said. "It makes sense."

Miller said DuPont is pleased with the work force, its partnerships with government on all levels and the site.

"The whole environment is very supportive for investment," he said.

Miller said the company also is committed to finding ways to reduce the need for fossil fuels. Currently, solar energy is supported by government subsidies. For it to really succeed, he said, its costs have to be reduced. DuPont is working on that, he said.

"It's a very, very, very cool place in the history of photovoltaics," Miller said. "I promise you, you're going to look back on today and say, 'I was there when this industry really started taking off.' "

Staff writer Catherine Pritchard can be reached at pritchardc@fayobserver.com or 486-3517.

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