

VW to Expand U.S. Workforce

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By Matthew Dolan

Volkswagen Group of America said on Tuesday it is hiring to fill 200 new jobs at a Chattanooga, Tenn., factory that opened last year.

VW is boosting the plant's production capacity by about 12%, to assemble about 35 cars an hour with more workers on two shifts. Typically, auto plants can operate with up to three shifts of assembly-line employees. The Chattanooga plant, built at a cost of \$1 billion, currently employs 2,500 workers and since May has produced a mid-sized sedan, the Passat.

At the plant, about 2,000 workers are employed directly by Volkswagen and another 500 work for Aerotek, the auto company's contractor. VW is expected to hire from its current pool of contract workers while Aerotek is expected to hire additional employees to fill the gaps, company officials said.

The Chattanooga plant was a focus of United Auto Workers union President Bob King last year as he tried to put together a drive to organize at least one foreign-owned plant in the U.S.

However, the union late last year pulled back from a promise to target one foreign-based auto company for its organizing efforts. The union and labor officials at Volkswagen in Wolfsburg, Germany, held talks about VW labor efforts to establish a German-style system of worker representation at the Tennessee plant, but no agreement was reached.

Volkswagen executives have said they won't try to block a unionization effort at the Chattanooga plant, if workers there support an organizing drive by the UAW.

Helped by favorable foreign exchange rates, and an ample supply of affordable labor, the U.S. is emerging as fertile ground for foreign auto makers who want to build cars and trucks.

[Volkswagen](#) AG is mulling over a second plant to produce Audi vehicles in the U.S. [BMW](#) AG is expanding its plant in South Carolina while [Daimler](#) AG's Mercedes-Benz unit is considering adding a second U.S. plant.

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