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SECTION C

Bendix invests millions in Huntington campus

Distribution center plans upgrades in multiyear project

SHERRY SLATER
The Journal Gazette

Bendix is investing more than \$10 million in its Huntington distribution center to increase capacity and efficiency, officials announced Thursday.

The planned upgrades in automation technology will transform the Bendix Commercial Vehicle Systems location into a state-of-the-art facility, the company said in a news release.

The multiyear project includes consolidating the manufacturer's damper production into a single, larger space by the end of this year.

Eric Meehan, interim managing director of operations in Huntington, said the company has repeatedly grown and expanded during its 40 years in the northeast Indiana location.

"These exciting new changes are part of Bendix's larger strategic plan for increasing efficiency, expanding capacity and enabling

future growth," he said in a statement. "They are one more way we continue to optimize our manufacturing operations and distribution, while addressing customer demand at the highest level possible. Importantly, the initiatives also further cement Bendix's place as a vital corporate contributor and employer of choice in our home community of Huntington."

Spokeswoman Barbara Gould

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Courtesy

This warehouse in Huntington is Bendix's primary distribution center to customers including Mack and International.

BENDIX

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was unable Thursday to provide a more specific amount for the investment. She confirmed that Bendix was offered economic development incentives tied to the investment, but she didn't say how much was promised or by which government entities.

The company now employs more than 540 workers on Riverfork Drive on three shifts, Gould said. The operation stretches across 855,000 square feet in four buildings on the Huntington campus.

No new jobs will be created immediately, she said, but the company continues to evaluate its business needs and the resulting effects on its workforce.

Bendix is under the corporate umbrella of Knorr-Bremse, a publicly traded, Munich, Germany-based conglomerate that supplies the commercial vehicle and rail industries. Avon, Ohio-based Bendix develops and makes parts including braking systems for commercial vehicles.

Bendix customers include Volvo, Mack, International, Caterpillar, Cummins and aftermarket service providers - large and small - for the transportation sector, Gould said.

Thursday's news comes less than 10 days after company officials announced they will consolidate their Sparks, Nevada, distribution center with the Huntington location. The company expects to move all operations and parts inventory by June 30.

The Huntington operation is the company's primary North American distribution point, an April 16 news release said.

Piotr Sroka, Bendix president, chief operating officer, and chief executive officer, was quoted in that announcement.

"Delivering value to our customers is at the core of all we do," he said in a statement. "Consolidating our U.S.-based distribution

operations into the state-of-the-art, multishift-enabled Bendix Distribution Center at our Huntington location ensures improved responsiveness and flexibility for our customers - including increased accessibility. Thanks to a full slate of continuous improvement actions underway - and with new expanded hours for our shipping operation out of Huntington - we expect our service and responsiveness to improve even more as a result of this action."

Bendix will implement automated storage and retrieval system technology, a warehouse control system and automated conveyance to create a goods-to-person, or GTP, system in its distribution center, Thursday's release said.

"GTP is the process of using automation to retrieve products and deliver them to pick/pack stations where they can be processed for shipment or used in production," the release said. "The process differs from sending employees to retrieve materials and bring them back to the stations. This leading technology will improve safety, ergonomics, quality, and efficiency, and will increase material flow."

Randy Seaman, the company's distribution director, said productivity and delivery capacity will increase as a result.

Reconfiguring the warehouse will also create about 90,000 square feet of free space, which can be used for future expansion, officials said.

"We're investing in the future of our employees in Huntington with this technology," Seaman said in a statement. "We will engage in extensive training in the new technology for our engineering and maintenance staffs, as well as for hourly employees. The new system will advance the skill level of our distribution team members."

The new system is expected to be in operation by the middle of next year.

sslater@jg.net