

50 NEW JOBS

# Pennsylvania Fastener Firm Plans Factory

BY ERIC CARLSON

A Pennsylvania-based firm that makes fasteners for the defense and aerospace industries plans to move its manufacturing operation to the Leland Industrial Park, where it will build a \$2 million factory and hire more than 50 local workers.

The company, QRP Inc. of Williamsport, Pa., plans to close down its factory there and begin operation in Leland by April, 1994, according to Tom Monks, executive director of the Brunswick County Economic Development Commission.

At the county commissioners' meeting Monday, Monks was authorized to apply for \$45,575 in N.C. Industrial Building Renovation Fund grants to extend water and sewer service to the 6.2-acre site where QRP plans to construct a 30,000-square-foot building.

All but "three or four" of the 50 to 60 employees at the new plant will be hired locally through the N.C. Employment Security Commission, Monks said. The company will be seeking skilled machinists, machine operators, laborers and support personnel to include engineers, supervisors and accounting and clerical staff.

Training for the new jobs will be offered on site and through Brunswick Community College at its industrial park training center, Monks said.

The company's name is an acronym for the "quick release pins" it manufactures primarily for large aerospace and defense contractors such as the Boeing, Grumman and McDonnell Douglas.

"These products have been used regularly in

military applications and are now eagerly being sought out for many commercial uses," Monks told the commissioners.

In addition to their use in the aircraft industry, the pins are frequently employed on farming equipment and wheel chairs. Monks said QRP also takes special orders for customers that need quick release pins for other applications.

Contacted at the company's home office in Williamsport on Tuesday, QRP General Manager William Baker said he could not discuss plant operations or comment about the move to Leland.

"It hasn't been announced here," Baker said. He directed inquiries to QRP President Tom Kievit at the company's "sales office" in New Jersey. There was no answer Tuesday morning at the telephone number given.

Bob Raleigh, business editor at the Williamsport Sun-Gazette, said Tuesday that QRP is a "very quiet and private" company that has been a "good, stable and reserved" corporate citizen since it opened a plant there in the mid 1980s.

He said the company is probably one of several firms that have entered into lease purchase agreements with the Lycoming Industrial Properties Corp., a development arm of the local chamber of commerce. If so, Raleigh speculated that QRP may have decided not to purchase its facility when the lease expires.

Although Monks would not reveal the location of the QRP factory slated for closure, he said

the company had decided not to purchase a building it was leasing for a factory in Pennsylvania.

Telephone directory assistance in Pennsylvania has only two listings for QRP Inc., one in Williamsport and one in Steelton, a suburb of Harrisburg. The Steelton number connected calls to a telephone answering service where a representative said she had knowledge of a Tom Kievit or a William Baker.

A business reporter at the Harrisburg Patriot-News said the paper's library shows no record of a QRP factory in Steelton.

Raleigh said that QRP's Williamsport operation employs about 50 non-union workers. If the plant closes, it will be the latest of several manufacturers who have left the area, mostly lured to locations that offering lower wage, he said.

The new factory will be the ninth tenant at the Leland Industrial Park. Monks said machine industries like QRP are "the most active type of projects" of those the EDC is trying to attract to the area.

He said QRP's choice of Brunswick County was "a direct result" of a like decision by one of the area's newest industries, the HSM Machine Works in Phoenix. HSM is also a machine shop operation that supplies parts for the aircraft industry.

A \$12,000 study recently completed for the EDC lists fabricated metal operations as one of the seven manufacturing industries most likely to locate in Brunswick County.

## NRC, CP&L Will Discuss Second Unit Restart

Restart of Unit 1 of the Brunswick Nuclear Plant was the subject of a meeting set today (Thursday) at 1 p.m. between Nuclear Regulatory Commission officials and Carolina Power & Light management at the plant in Southport.

The meeting is open to observation by the public, with NRC officials available afterward to answer questions.

As of Tuesday CP&L spokesman Mac Harris said CP&L's schedule calls for beginning the restart process Thursday, Sept. 23.

Following a "slow and deliberate" process similar to that used in bringing Unit 2 on line this past spring, the utility expects it to take about a week to bring the unit into service, and several weeks more before the unit is operating at full power.

"The actual time will depend on how successfully the restart goes," said Harris. "It's about a month-long process."

CP&L allowed approximately 30 days to 40 days to bring Unit 2 back

into service and to full power, with intermittent testing. Though time had been allowed for two shutdowns should repairs or conditions warrant, none was needed.

At a meeting of NRC officials in June, Regional NRC Director called that start-up "probably one of the smoothest I have experienced."

Unit 2 is now approaching 100 continuous days on line since restart, Harris said.

That is the longest the unit has operated continuously, when coming out of an outage, since it began operating in 1975.

"We've worked very hard to improve our ability to do on-line maintenance," he said. "That's one reason we've had the good run."

On-line maintenance refers to the capability of making repairs without having to shut down the unit. While it must come out of service while certain repairs are being made, in other instances maintenance or repairs can be done by simply isolat-

ing the system involved.

Unit 1 has been undergoing refueling and an intensive repair and inspection effort since both units of the boiling water reactor plant were shut down in April 1992.

After that voluntary shutdown CP&L developed plans for correcting problems at the plant as well as embarking on a long-range improve-

ment program.

According to Ebnetter, since last January "significant progress" has been made, both in the condition of the plant and in its operation.

However Brunswick Nuclear Plant will remain on the NRC's "watch list" for close monitoring until it demonstrates sustained performance.

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