



AIRIDE PLANT—The long building near the top of this aerial photo is the Company Airide factory in Noblesville, Ind., opened for production in recent months. Rubber air springs, mar-

ked as "Airide by Firestone" are produced here. **RIGHT**—Large manufacturing area of plant before installation of the equipment. The factory structure contains 550 tons of steel.

Building Of Indiana Air Springs Plant Good Example Of Company At Work

In recent months another new Company plant was opened for production. A steady stream of rubber air springs, incorporating nylon fabric such as is produced at the Gastonia plant, began rolling off the assembly lines at Noblesville, Ind. "Airide by Firestone" would be marketed to be used as optional equipment in 1958 automobiles.

Starting the wheels of this factory didn't just happen overnight. Into it went months of preparation, planning and work by hundreds of people all over the country, including many employees from the headquarters plant in Akron.

Much had to be done before volume production could be established. A site had to be chosen; the plant had to be built, machines for the new product had to be designed and manufactured, and other machines had to be purchased. All these had to be installed. Water and steam lines and electricity had to be put into service.

IT ALL BEGAN in the fall of 1956, when Chairman Harvey S. Firestone, Jr. announced plans for construction of the Noblesville plant. It would be built adjacent to the Industrial Products plant, where air springs had been produced for some years, for use on Greyhound Scenicruisers, General Motors trucks, and for rail car application.

The new Airide springs were developed by Firestone and are now replacing conventional leaf and coil springs on vehicles.

After the decision came to build the plant, D. E. Engle, division manager of plant procurement and operation, started procedures for letting contracts for design and construction of the new facility.

Plans for the one-story, steel-frame building were drawn up by Giffels and Vallet, Inc., L. Rossetti, architects, of Detroit, specialists in factory design. The plans called for a large manufacturing area, office space, locker rooms, and lunch room.

In November of 1956, officials of the Industrial Products Company, including P. P. Crisp, president; B. J. Ferkes, Noblesville plant manager; and city and county officials watched as Mayor Herman E. Lawson of Noblesville turned the first shovelful of earth for the building. The contractor, H. K. Ferguson Company of Cleveland, was ready to begin construction.

THROUGHOUT the winter months, as builders erected steel beams, poured concrete and installed plumbing, many Akron employees were busy helping to get the new plant underway.

People of the engineering division's design department started drawings for efficient equipment layout, piping and electrical wiring.

Members of the engineering laboratory of the



SUBSTATION—High-voltage electrical substation supplies power for the airide plant. Overhead pipelines bring steam and compressed air from nearby plant.

PRODUCTION—Airide springs began coming from the production lines at Noblesville last summer. Supervisor Lowell Burriss instructs new employees.

Akron plants began producing designs of special new equipment which would be needed for air spring production. Original models of this equipment—such as assembly machines, servers and curing stands—were manufactured and proved-out in the laboratory.

After these first models were tested, employees of the Mechanical Building, Akron, were called upon to build the additional machines needed for the plant. These included a great calendar, mills, a bias cutter and machine shop equipment. It was the job of these purchasing men to place orders where quality products could be obtained at the best possible price, then to follow through on orders to see that materials were delivered on schedule. The Akron department also purchased construction steel, main power cables and other electrical service equipment.

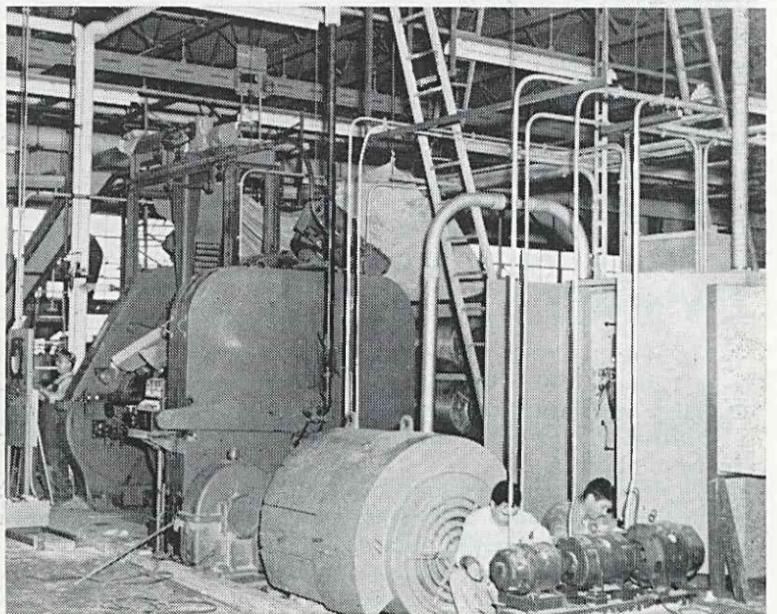
P. F. Krans, engineer assigned to Industrial Products, followed the entire construction job. He spent many days in Noblesville, supervising the work and setting up production. He worked closely with Bill Klein and Jim Robertson of the Noblesville plant, who were directly in charge of the construction.

ALSO GOING from Akron to Noblesville was Chuck Williams of the engineering department, to supervise equipment installation and piping. Electrical engineer J. F. Wright was there, too, watching over electrical operations, including installation of the sub-station, power lines, machine hookups and proper lighting.

After all these phases of the work were completed, these men stayed on to work out any problems and to see that the new, modern establishment was operating at peak efficiency.

When the plant began production last summer, almost 150 persons were hired to work.

So, with the volume production of a new product comes another plant affording jobs to many people and adding thousands of dollars to the economy of the Noblesville area. It required the time and talents of many Firestone employees in Noblesville and outside Noblesville, all working together to put the Company's 39th domestic plant into production.



GIGANTIC MACHINE—This calendar forms strips of processed rubber into one continuous sheet.



CONFERENCE—Firestone and Ferguson company personnel held many discussions on planning and building. From left, W. A. Klein, chief engineer for the Noblesville plant; James Robertson, Firestone project engineer; and John H. Travis, project engineer for Ferguson, go over blueprints of the plant.

