

GE to Expand in West Jefferson, Across NC

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GE Aviation has finalized plans to break ground this year on an advanced composite component factory near Asheville in Western North Carolina, while making new investments in its West Jefferson facilities and other plants in North Carolina. Colleen Athans, Vice President and General Manager, Supply Chain was joined by Governor Pat McCrory and North Carolina Commerce Secretary Sharon Decker to announce final approval from the state's Economic Investment Committee. The new 125,000-square-foot facility in Asheville will produce engine components made of advanced ceramic matrix composite materials, with hiring expected at the new CMC components plant as early as 2014. Within five years, the workforce at the plant is expected to grow to more than 340 people. Proposed investment in the West Jefferson facility, which currently does machining of rotating parts, will also allow for increased capacity as it assumes additional machining work. The facility is poised for an 80,000-square-foot expansion which will come with an additional 105 jobs by 2017. The new GE Aviation facilities represent an investment of \$195 million across its North Carolina operations through 2017. GE Aviation has more than 1,300 employees in North Carolina at sites in Durham, West Jefferson, Wilmington, and Asheville. Overall, the new CMC facility, combined with plant and equipment upgrades at existing sites across North Carolina, will create 242 additional GE jobs by 2017. The introduction of CMC components into the hot section of GE jet engines represents a significant technology breakthrough for GE and the jet propulsion industry. CMCs are made of silicon carbide ceramic fibers and ceramic resin, manufactured through a highly sophisticated process and further enhanced with proprietary coatings, according to the company release. GE noted close work with the North Carolina Department of Commerce to secure the proposed Asheville location and investments in existing facilities, citing a number of local agencies including Ashe County, the Golden Leaf Foundation, and others who have provided technical support and incentives to ensure a smooth and successful start-up. To prepare for the new factory, GE will partner with Asheville-Buncombe Technical Community College (ABTCC). The training program at ABTCC will allow current and prospective employees to train in a hands-on environment with state-of-the-art machinery.