

Two oil-field equipment companies plotting jobs in OKC

by Brianna Bailey

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Tanner Beckner works on a fracturing unit at UE Manufacturing. (Maïke Sabolich)

OKLAHOMA CITY – Two oil-field service manufacturing companies, U.K.-based Centek Inc. and Oklahoma City-based UE Manufacturing, plan to create more than 250 new jobs in the city over the next five years to keep pace with increased demand for oil-field equipment in the region.

The Oklahoma City Economic Development Trust will consider entering into negotiations with both companies this week for job creation incentive money through the city's \$75 million Strategic Investment Program.

Based in southwestern England, Centek makes well casing stabilizers used in oil and gas drilling. The company plans to open its first manufacturing plant in the

United States in Oklahoma City to serve its customers in the United States and Mexico.

"Oklahoma is kind of at the center geographically as to where they will provide equipment, so Oklahoma City made a lot of sense to them," said Cathy O'Connor, general manager of the Oklahoma City Economic Development Trust.

Attempts to contact company officials in Newton Abbot, Devon, in the U.K. were unsuccessful on Monday.

"I believe the proximity to their market was really a key factor," said Robin Roberts-Krieger, executive vice president of economic development for the Greater Oklahoma City Chamber. "They liked what they saw, liked the cost of doing business here and we were able to make it work for them."

Centek wants to begin negotiations with the city for \$200,000 in job creation incentives for opening its new North American manufacturing plant here, according to a report to the Oklahoma City Economic Development Trust. The company would create anywhere from 60 to 100 new jobs in Oklahoma City over the next three to five years. The jobs would have an average first-year wage of \$41,850.

Oklahoma City-based UE Manufacturing, a subsidiary of oil-field equipment company UE Engines, has plans to add 170 new manufacturing jobs in the city over the next five years with an average first-year wage of \$37,428.

The company manufactures oil-field service equipment that is distributed across the continental United States, with a concentration of customers in Oklahoma and Texas, said Ronnie Stover, vice president of UE Manufacturing.

The company is expanding to keep pace with growing demand because of new oil and gas activity across the country, Stover said.

"Business is good, along with activity in the oil field," he said. "If it's good, then we are too."

The company had considered moving some of the new jobs to Texas, because of its customer base there. The availability of incentive money factored into the company's decision to keep the jobs in Oklahoma City, Stover said.

The Greater Oklahoma City Chamber has recommended that the city give UE Manufacturing

\$340,000 in Strategic Investment Plan money for the new jobs.

The city's Strategic Investment Plan was created in 2007 to encourage companies to expand or move their operations to the city by providing cash payments to companies that meet certain annual payroll and wage requirements.

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