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Could you please describe the “Think Blue. Factory.” initiative?

We have set a clear target: Volkswagen wants to become the world’s most successful, fascinating, and sustainable automobile manufacturer. This is also with regard to ecological efforts. Think Blue is our attitude and behavior regarding sustainability. The color blue reminds us of deep blue skies and oceans. Green goes Blue now at Volkswagen!

This also refers to our manufacturing process. Customers do care how their product – or car – is manufactured. This is one reason why organic food and fair trade products are successful. We feel our responsibility as corporate citizens. And we think that ecological manufacturing is a competitive advantage as it creates a positive corporate image and also saves costs for our customers.

“Think Blue. Factory.” is the program with which all Volkswagen plants reduce their impact on the environment by using resources more efficiently and reducing emissions. We have five indicators: Water consumption, CO₂ emissions, solvent emissions, waste, and energy consumption. And we have one target for all of them: a 25 percent reduction per car by 2018 compared with the numbers from 2010. For Chattanooga, the starting point for this goal is the year 2012 because a new factory began production then.

Of course, innovative manufacturing technology and systematic implementation processes also play a vital role. More importantly, sharing knowledge between the plants around the world helps utilize the size of our company as a competitive advantage. The 27 Volkswagen brand plants have created more than 3,400 environmental measures for our plan of action.

As a result, every plant and every shop in the plant has designed a defined path to reach our goals. Every measure is a step with which we achieve our targets and make car manufacturing more sustainable. Half of these measures have already been successfully implemented.

Please outline the newest inventions and current projects at the Volkswagen assembly plant in Chattanooga, TN.

At our Chattanooga plant, we build the Passat for our North American customers (USA, Canada, and Mexico) as well as for the Middle-Eastern and South Korean markets. The Chattanooga plant is a global role model for sustainable manufacturing. Key highlights are listed below:

At the plant, we have a special water harvesting system that collects rainwater from the roofs and stores it until needed. This water is used to flush toilets and cool the tips of welding robots. Additionally, a solar park – the largest of any car plant in the U.S. and the largest in the state of Tennessee – helps produce 12.5 percent of the plant’s daily energy

needs. Of course, at the plant we also use highly efficient electrical appliances, e.g. LED lighting systems.

Furthermore, the Volkswagen Academy, another sustainability measure, has implemented the German dual educational system in its Automation Mechatronics Program. This system trains apprentices during a three-year program in electrical, mechanical, and other vital systems. This program has gained national attention as apprentice programs of this type are not common in the U.S.

What makes the Chattanooga plant so unique?

The Chattanooga plant is the world's first and only LEED Platinum certified automobile manufacturing plant. When opened, the factory was the first to entirely implement the "Eco Dry Scrubber System" process in the Paint Shop, which eliminates water consumption by 20,000 gallons per day. Moreover, the plant showcases Volkswagen's commitment to advanced manufacturing in the U.S.

What impact has the new plant had on the city of Chattanooga and its surrounding area since its launch in 2011?

A University of Tennessee at Knoxville (UTK) research study issued in 2012 showed that Volkswagen Chattanooga created 12,400 full-time jobs, was responsible for \$643.1 million in annual income, and has attracted 17 supplier companies to the area.

The UTK study stated that of the 12,400 full-time jobs, the Chattanooga plant directly employs 2,415 individuals and indirectly employs 9,985 individuals through the suppliers and other companies where Volkswagen spends its earnings.

This generates \$643.1 million in annual income and another \$53.5 million increase in state and local tax revenues annually. Of the \$643.1 million that Volkswagen pays, \$159.2 million is paid to direct Volkswagen employees and indirect employees account for \$483.9 million in income due to multiplier effects.

The Volkswagen Group aims to become the world's greenest carmaker and a leader in e-mobility by 2018. In what ways are you working to achieve this goal?

The Group has set itself a number of ambitious targets. Apart from reducing energy and water consumption, waste, and emissions per unit by 25% by 2018, based on figures for 2010, Volkswagen has for instance been the first carmaker to commit to cutting European new car fleet CO₂ emissions to 95 g CO₂/km by 2020. Every new model generation is made 10 to 15 percent more efficient than its predecessor. We also extend the availability of alternative powertrain systems – such as CNG, pure electric and plug-in hybrid – as an integral part of our CO₂ mitigation strategy. The gradual rollout of our Modular Transverse Matrix (MQB) and other modular tool kits enable us to make all segments electric. In response to demand, we can quickly and flexibly adjust production and offer up to 40 models with alternative powertrains – built bumper-to-bumper on the same production line.