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Pulse Electronics prepares for move to Germantown

Jun. 11, 1997

County and state officials joined area business leaders last month to break ground for a new manufacturing plant and office site that could move roughly 200 jobs from Rockville to Germantown.

Pulse Electronics, a locomotive component manufacturing firm now located in Rockville, plans to build a 75,000-square-foot plant off Observation Drive in the Milestone section of Germantown.

County Executive Douglas M. Duncan said the new site for the manufacturer will mean new jobs for the growing community.

"Germantown has been blessed for many years with good residential development, [and] we're seeing a lot of good retail development," Duncan said at the May 29 ceremony. "But the one area we need to do more of is good jobs."

Pulse Project Manager Ira Pollack said the company plans to create marketing, assembly, production and engineering jobs to increase its workforce to 500. Pulse Electronics currently employs 280 workers, according to the county's Office of Public Informati

on,

"These are not entry-level jobs; these are jobs that are quality jobs," Pollack said after the ceremony. "Engineers are more than just entry-level positions in terms of their salary and what they do when they come into a company."

Pollack said Pulse Electronics sought approval to move its plant to Germantown in March because company officials said their current building near Montrose Road in Rockville was too small for the expanding company.

Duncan said the county board approved the move in order to keep the company in Montgomery County.

"They're a company that grew up in Rockville, started here and lived their entire corporate life here," Duncan said. "And for us to lose them to another jurisdiction would have been a real loss."

The county will provide Pulse with expansion assistance in the form of a conditional grant from the county's Economic Development Fund, in addition to support in facilitating completion of the construction project.

Pollack said the move to Germantown was also based on the company's desire to stay close to the I-270 Technology Corridor, where most of the company's employees live.

"This is a prestigious site sitting right on 270 where we won't lose our employee base because it's only 10 miles from home," Pollack said. "Many of our workers live up in the Frederick area, in Germantown or in Gaithersburg, so the commute is easier."

Pollack said he anticipates construction will be complete on the new manufacturing plant by the end of this year or the beginning of 1998, weather permitting.

The 28-year-old Pulse Electronics began as a joint venture by founder and President Emilio Fernandez and Executive Vice President Angel P. Bezos. Fernandez said the idea to start the company came to them while they were students at the University of Maryl

and. Fernandez said he named the company after an engineering course the two were taking.

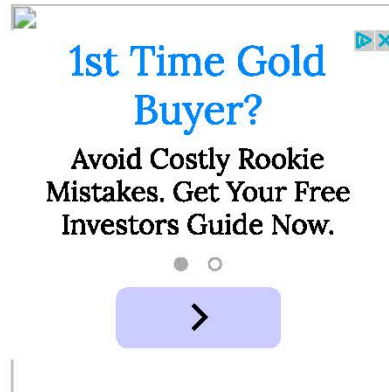
"We were doing well in a course called Pulse Technologies, so why don't we call it Pulse Electronics?" Fernandez said. "Two days later we registered the company with the county, and we have been building projects and working together for the 28 years."

Now a leading manufacturer of advanced electronic systems for trains, Pulse Electronics has developed data recorders for trains — the locomotive equivalent of the airplane "black box" — to reconstruct accidents.

In February 1995, the Wilderming, Pa.-based Westinghouse Air Brake Co. purchased Pulse. Fernandez said the company's relationship with the air brake manufacturer has been very valuable.

"I should mention that our parent company, the Westinghouse Air Brake Co., is very supportive of all of our actions in Montgomery County," Fernandez said.

Following the speeches, Duncan presented Fernandez with a county flag to fly over the new site when construction is completed. Duncan, Fernandez and General Manager Jim McClaine then donned hard hats and shovels and broke ground on the new site.



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