

Rane comes to Logan County; 1st North American plant presence

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One of the big three early industrial plants in southcentral Kentucky has a new owner.

Rane Precision Die Casting Inc. is convinced the workforce in Russellville will give the India-based automotive products company a faster start-up time than a new-up-from-the-ground plant operation would have, officials said.

The plant is the former home of Rockwell International, which opened in the mid-1950s on 40 acres in Russellville. The plant today employs 175 workers in the 150,000-square-foot facility. The land on which the plant sits is owned by the Logan Industrial Development Authority.

Rane Group, which is making its first entry into the North American automotive components market, had a choice between the United States and Mexico, said a Logan County economic development official Monday. Rane has 25 plants around the world.

Rane announced its acquisition of Precision at 232 Hopkinsville Road on Monday afternoon in a public unveiling of the new sign. Russellville will be its North American headquarters.

Company officials became aware of Precision Die Casting Inc. of Russellville on the market for sale about a year ago, said Tom Harned, executive director of the Logan Economic Alliance for Development.

"The Russellville plant has never ceased operation since 1956," Harned said. The working plant positions Rane for the future.

"Rane is excited to be entering the U.S. market and pleased with the opportunity this acquisition presents," Harish Lakshman, company managing director, said in a news release.

"We look forward to a long and prosperous relationship with Russellville and Logan County. We are impressed with the quality of the workforce – it being a major factor in our decision."

Rockwell International, as it was known then, was the first large industrial plant in Logan County, breaking ground in 1955, Harned said. Industrial plants in Simpson and Warren counties would soon follow as industrialization ramped up in the region.

Potter & Brumfield took hold in Franklin and Simpson County, and Holley Performance Products – then known as Holley Carburetor – came to Bowling Green and Warren County, Harned said.

Joining the announcement Monday with company officials was the Logan County Chamber of Commerce; LEAD; the Tennessee Valley Authority; the Russellville Electric Plant Board and the Kentucky Cabinet for Economic Development.

"This is a big deal, We feel we saved 175 jobs," Harned said.

"Rane brings a wealth of expertise and marketing contacts to the table," Mike Torti, plant president and chief executive officer said in a news release. "We are thrilled to have them on board. Our highly trained employees made this acquisition possible and offer a substantial advantage to Rane going forward."

The plant became Sensus Precision Die Casting in 2009 after its Rockwell designation. The Sensus part of the name was then dropped, shortening the name to Precision Die Casting.

Harned said by Rane buying an existing plant with a trained workforce, it shortened the start-up time of its first North American presence by 18 to 24 months. Again, Kentucky's low utility cost played a role in the decision.

Precision Die Casting is a leading supplier of high-quality, lightweight aluminum die castings to the North American automotive market. Precision Die Casting, founded in 1956, produces complex, thin-walled, low porosity, high-pressure aluminum die castings, a product niche for which there is limited available industry capacity, the company website noted.

The portfolio includes components for steering and compressor components, pumps and valve housings.

Rane, based in Chennai, India, is a global manufacturer of steering and suspension linkages, steering gears and high-precision aluminum die cast products for the transportation industry. PDC represents Rane's first investment in North America. The company, which began in 1960, has a steering and linkage products division and the die casting products division.

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