

Firm to employ 200 by 2010

Indianapolis Star, The (IN)

January 31, 2008

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A company that earlier this year announced plans to locate in Mount Comfort says it will employ 200 people at its site by 2010.

Freije Treatment Systems, which currently employs about 25 people, plans to complete its move to the Mount Comfort Industrial Park by the end of February.

Gov. Mitch Daniels accompanied the firm's CEO, William F. Freije III, at a news conference last week. Daniels said the firm represents the kind of success story that boosts Indiana's economy.

"(This is) a homegrown business," Daniels said. "It starts with a customer's problem. It involves that spark of innovation and ingenuity to create something better and greater than anybody had before."

The company specializes in salt-free, environmentally friendly water-treatment systems -- an invention of William Freije that uses electronic technology to neutralize the charges of certain minerals in water, causing them not to bond together and create hardness in water.

The company will lease 34,383 square feet at the Mount Comfort site and invest more than \$2 million in the facility, Freije said. The company is moving from its current site near 75th Street and Hague Road on the Northeastside of Indianapolis.

Manufacturing will occur at other locations, Freije said. The headquarters will employ specialists in engineering, sales and accounting, among other areas. Compensation will range from \$40,000 up to six-digit salaries, officials said.

Economic development officials expressed enthusiasm not just for the number of new jobs being created by Freije, but for the type of jobs.

"The jobs Freije is creating are the kind of knowledge-based, highly skilled, high-paying jobs that any community would like to see locate in their city, town or county," said Dennis Maloy, executive director of the Hancock Economic Development Council.

When Precedent developed the Mount Comfort Industrial Park, Maloy said, many involved with the project anticipated attracting warehouses and logistical hubs. While that vision has transpired, the development also has attracted more sophisticated operations involving high-tech and other industrial jobs, Maloy said.

Those are the types of jobs Daniels said he wants to attract statewide, especially those involving companies engaged in creating new products from the first stages of research and development.

"This kind of business with a better mousetrap -- new technology that has beaten the rest of the marketplace with such an innovation right here at home -- has the potential to grow explosively," Daniels said. "If you can go from 15 to 200 (employees) in such a short period of time, you can go from 200 to who knows where."

"As we see these companies sprouting and growing perhaps exponentially, that's when we'll know the Indiana economy is firing on the cylinder that matters most."

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Record Number: **ind127672528**