

SCHENECTADY

GE added 450 jobs in city during 2008

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General Electric ended last year with 450 more workers at its Erie Boulevard facility than the prior year, as the company moves ahead with plans to expand its renewable energy business, a company official said Wednesday.

Jan Smith, manager of public affairs for GE Energy, said the company finished 2008 with a work force of 3,750 people at the Schenectady/Rotterdam site.

The employees are in various divisions including hourly workers, but Smith said a number are in white collar jobs in the company's

new wind energy management and service center.

Smith said the company expects to open the management and customer service center this summer. GE is spending \$31 million to renovate Building 53, a formerly vacant five-story office building built in 1909, for the center.

GE announced in 2007 it would add 500 high-paying, white-collar jobs when the company relocated its Renewable Energy Global Headquarters to Schenectady. The company is developing products to create energy from wind and sunlight as well as from its traditional technology using fossil fuels.

Approximately 150 of the new jobs are for the product management and customer service center. Smith said GE has until 2011

to meet a deadline to create 500 jobs in Schenectady County and fully expects to do so, despite the recession.

The company made the commitment to state and local officials, she said. The state, for example, provided \$5 million for the project. Schenectady County and the city of Schenectady will provide tax abatements of approximately \$825,000 each to GE over a period of 10 years. The city has also agreed to provide \$2 million in sales tax savings on investments for building materials, furniture and fixtures.

Smith said recruitment for the center is on-going.

Local officials said GE's decision to open a new renewable energy facility in Schenectady is further validation of the area's emergence

as a location for leading companies in clean technologies like wind energy.

The Erie Boulevard facility will contain a 19,000-square-foot atrium attached to the warehouse. The atrium will house a nearly-four-story model of a wind turbine.

On the outside, it will contain solar panels, each 8 feet tall and 20 feet long. Some will be fixed in place while others will move with the sun, allowing customers to see exactly what they could purchase.

At its World War II-era peak, the GE Schenectady plant employed more than 40,000.

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