

Our Point of View: With New Jobs at Texas Plant, Toyota Now Helps Employ 200,000 Americans

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by Jim Wiseman

Here at Toyota, our commitment to quality and safety goes hand-in-hand with the deepening of our roots in America. These roots were first planted more than 50 years ago with the opening of a small sales office in Hollywood, California, in 1957. We've sure come a long way since then. In fact, Cars.com recently named the Camry the industry's "[Most American-Made Car](#)" for a second straight year. Toyota was also the only auto manufacturer to earn three spots on this coveted Top 10 list.

We're proud of that distinction, since we've worked hard over the years to steadily increase our local purchasing. We now spend more than \$20 billion each year with local suppliers and that, translates into thousands of good, stable American jobs.

Certainly we've had our challenges this year, but there are many positive stories worth noting. For example, we're delighted that no other manufacturer has more vehicles on the 2010 "[Top Safety Picks](#)" list compiled by the independent Insurance Institute for Highway Safety. Seven Toyota and Lexus models have earned the IIHS designation this year, and no other manufacturer has earned more. That doesn't happen without great quality and outstanding engineering and safety technology. I'd argue that it also doesn't happen without a strong manufacturing, sales and service presence on the ground – where our customers live and work.

Our family of Toyota team members and directly attributable employees at our dealers and suppliers in North America is now nearly 200,000 strong – and it's growing. This week, I'm at our plant in San Antonio for the official production launch of the Tacoma at our Texas truck plant. Last fall, we had to suspend production in San Antonio for three months because of the economic downturn. But we did not lay off any of our team members. Instead, as we did at other manufacturing facilities in the U.S., we used the opportunity to strengthen team members skills through training and to improve plant processes.

Now you can feel the excitement here as we start up the Tacoma. Everyone at this plant is absolutely focused on customer satisfaction. We've added nearly 1,000 new manufacturing jobs to handle expansion at the plant, where we also assemble the Tundra. And more production means more opportunities for our suppliers as well. All told, there are more than 5,000 Texans employed at this site.

We have also resumed plant construction in Blue Springs, Mississippi, where our investment will create more than 2,000 American jobs at our plant, and roughly 2,000 more at nearby suppliers and other local businesses. It's our [10th U.S. plant](#) and will bring production of the Corolla back to the U.S. in the fall of next year, when some 90 percent of Corollas for U.S. drivers will be made here in North America. We're also shifting most production of our popular Highlander SUV from Japan to Indiana.

Increasingly, as Toyota gives more autonomy to its regions and works to make decision-making faster and more efficient, we're also further localizing plant and engineering leadership. In North America, we recently named four new North American plant presidents – Norm Bafunno, Wil James, Chris Nielsen and Brian Krinock – at our plants in Indiana, Kentucky, Texas and Ontario, and we have named an American – Mike Sweers – as chief engineer for development of the Tundra. Mike is the third American to be chief engineer on a vehicle. That list

will grow.

In the first full year of sales in the U.S. – 1958 – we sold just 288 cars. We are now selling thousands of vehicles here each day. But one thing hasn't changed at Toyota – our commitment to continuous improvement as we work to provide Americans with even safer, more reliable vehicles.

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