

January 15, 2010

<http://detnews.com/article/20100115/AUTO01/1150354>

## Battery maker to hire 540

Plants set for Livonia, Romulus offer range of jobs in producing hybrid car power packs

*JACLYN TROP*  
*The Detroit News*

A Massachusetts battery manufacturer will begin hiring hundreds of skilled Michigan workers this year for jobs at massive plants under development in Livonia and Romulus.

Watertown, Mass.-based A123 Systems expects to hire 540 permanent workers in construction, engineering, sales and marketing, administration and research and development at 300,000-square-foot plants in Romulus and Livonia.

"For displaced autoworkers who've had the rugs pulled out from under them, they have the skills needed for these 540 jobs," said Gov. Jennifer Granholm, who helped announce the jobs plan Thursday at an A123 factory in Novi.

A123 develops and manufactures advanced Nanophosphate lithium ion batteries and battery systems for clients including Chrysler Group LLC and Delphi Holdings LLP.

The company will begin producing batteries for hundreds of thousands of hybrid vehicles, as part of a multiyear contract with Fisker Automotive, a California-based green vehicle manufacturer. The battery systems will power the Fisker Karma Plug-in Hybrid Electric Vehicle, set to launch late this year.

Fisker's Karma is expected to have a range of 50 miles with an A123 lithium ion battery pack and a total range of 300 miles with an on-board generator with a four-cylinder gasoline engine.

The company's expansion in Michigan is being funded thanks to a recent \$249 million grant from the U.S. Department of Energy and money from its recent initial public offering.

The Livonia plant is under construction and expected to open in mid-2010 -- with construction of the Romulus facility slated to begin later this year-- and will help establish A123's North American coating operations. The Novi plant, which employs 120 workers, opened in January 2009 to manufacture lithium ion batteries.

"Our strategy is to deploy capital as we see customer demand developing, and we are encouraged by recent developments and the momentum within our overall portfolio of customer relationships across our key target markets," CEO David Vieau said.

Tax credits, as well as the state's strong labor pool, compelled the company to expand here, said Jason Forcier, vice president of automotive solutions. "That really was a big part of our locating here. Secondly, this is the epicenter of the U.S. automotive industry so we wanted to be near our clients."

Vieau said A123's funding will give the U.S. a level playing field with companies in Asia, where battery manufacturing has traditionally been centered.

Granholm said bills she signed at last year's North American International Auto Show in Detroit offered the

incentive for the new technology in Michigan. Michigan received 60 percent of all federal grant money available for the new technology, she said.

"It's a \$4 billion industry in Michigan now. Last year there wasn't anything. The green technology is expected to create 40,000 jobs in Michigan over the next 10 years," the governor said.

Though investment in alternative battery systems carries a hefty potential payoff, it's always risky to bet on unproven technology, said Patrick Anderson, founder and chief executive of Anderson Economic Group LLC, a consulting firm with offices in East Lansing and Chicago.

"Michigan is the center of the world automobile industry," Anderson said, "but it's not certain that battery systems or fuel cells or any other alternative to the internal combustion engine can take place here."

## Additional Facts

How to apply

Visit [www.a123systems.com](http://www.a123systems.com) to apply for a job.

---

© Copyright 2010 The Detroit News. All rights reserved.