



Fort Loudon's Atlas Copco Secoroc breaks ground on expansion that is expected to add 17 jobs

By **MARCUS RAUHUT** Staff writer

FORT LOUDON -- Atlas Copco Secoroc in Fort Loudon broke ground Tuesday for an expansion project that will bring at least 17 new jobs to the area.

Plant Manager Keith Mackling said the company is consolidating manufacturing operations from a facility in Virginia. The additional work will bring 17 new positions over the first few years on top of the 31 jobs already in Fort Loudon.

"I think a big question is why this plant, here. You have China today and India today ... making the same products," said Jaco van Der Merwe, vice president of manufacturing for Atlas Copco. "This plant is competitive with anything we have in China and India. And from a cost point of view, it's far superior."

The Sweden-based company designs and manufactures rock drilling equipment used in construction and mining.

State Sen. Richard Alloway, R-Chambersburg, said he had been working for months on this project and other economic development projects to expand the tax base in the Tuscarora School

District in order to make needed improvements to school facilities.

The state provided the company with a \$460,000 funding offer, consisting of a \$75,000 opportunity grant, a \$360,000 loan through the Pennsylvania Industrial Development Authority, and \$25,000 in job training assistance.

The project was coordinated through the Governor's Action Team. As part of its agreement, Atlas Copco agreed to create 17 jobs within three years and retain 29 jobs.

The 20,000-square-foot expansion represents a \$1.7 million investment to the facility that Atlas Copco acquired in 1989. In 2004, Atlas Copco acquired the drilling unit of Ingersoll Rand.

"That was really the point in time when business picked up tremendously," van Der Merwe said. "From 2004, growth in the economy and growth in the global mining industry just skyrocketed and we invested more or less \$3 million in new equipment here in this plant since 2005."

Mackling said the slowdown in construction did affect business, but markets are showing signs of improvement.

"We started to see recovery in the last four months and we have rehired some of the people we laid off earlier. We're very optimistic," he said.

Rockwell Construction, Mercersburg, has been awarded the expansion contract, planned for

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