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## Randolph County development coordinator: Three factories going up in Baldwin could bring more than 100 jobs

ISAAC SMITH THE SOUTHERN Nov 12, 2016



Getty Images

**BALDWIN** — Randolph County finalized a deal this week to bring new manufacturing work to Baldwin.

Randolph County Economic Development announced a new deal with Australian-based company Nu-Rock to open three facilities to produce cinder blocks using coal combustion waste materials created by the Dynegy power plant in Baldwin.

The plans have been a year in the making and Chris Martin, coordinator for Randolph County economic development, was excited to announce the project. Over time, the three new facilities opened by Nu-Rock could directly employ more than 100 people, he said, with the possibility of more when the transportation industry is considered. Martin said these are solid jobs with benefits, which could really boost the local economy.

“The economic impact is tremendous,” Martin said, adding that it reverses a bad cycle for the area.

“This sort of bucks the trend in Illinois of losing jobs,” he said. More than this, though, the announcement boosts morale for locals who may be searching for work or are underemployed.

"Hope" is the word Martin preferred. He said when one looks to the future and cannot see any bright spot, hope is lost, but this kind of announcement can go a long way to brightening that outlook.



Dennis Chernov, director of business development for Nu-Rock, said he is hopeful to have the first facility completed by the end of summer 2017 with the other two facilities going online a year later.

Jobs are not the only thing to be excited about, however. There are environmental impacts to consider as well. Nu-Rock, which won Green Building Product of the Year at the 2015 Sustainability Awards, produces a product comprised of 90 percent recycled materials, which it believes can significantly reduce global fly ash stockpiles. Nu-rock estimates 100 million tons of fly ash are produced yearly throughout the globe. This is directly in line with Dynegy's long-term plans.

"Dynegy's goal is to safely recycle 100 percent of coal combustion byproducts for beneficial reuse by 2020. We're 70 percent of the way there and the agreement with Nu Rock puts us a step closer to achieving our objective," said David Onufer, external

communications and media relations manager for Dynegy.

The products could also be considered an improvement on traditional concrete construction materials, Chernov said. As an example, he said, a conventional 8-inch concrete cinder block can withstand 2,000 pounds per square inch, while Nu-Rock's new products will be able to withstand 2,500 psi while weighing 30-50 percent less and costing less, all traits he hopes are popular with contractors.

Randolph County has provided a five-year tax abatement for Nu-Rock and worked with Erika Kennett from Illinois' Department of Commerce & Economic Opportunity to provide EDGE credits for the company.

Martin believes this new development will go along way toward keeping Randolph County's economy healthy. While it already has what he calls the big three industries — agriculture, mining and manufacturing — these new factories are a step toward ensuring growth in the county, he said.

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