

# Redding

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## Ventilation plant to bolster business sector

### Carolina company makes Redding first West Coast start-up

By David Benda, Record Searchlight

May 25, 2006

A North Carolina company that makes kitchen ventilation systems has picked Redding for its first manufacturing plant west of the Rocky Mountains.

Captive-Aire Systems Inc. expects to start production June 19 with 30 employees inside the former Redding French Bakery building on Lockheed Drive. The bakery left in January after parent Sarah Lee Food & Beverage transferred operations to San Luis Obispo.

Robert Luddy, Captive-Aire's president and founder, paid \$2.15 million in cash -- about \$600,000 below the list price -- for the 46,000-square-foot building near Redding Municipal Airport.

Luddy, 60, chose Redding after making his first trip to the north state in January.

"I think it was the strategic location, very good cooperation with the city, the economic development team and a good work force of people who want good jobs and will make excellent employees," Luddy said Wednesday from the company's Raleigh, N.C., headquarters.

The availability of the Lockheed Drive building helped seal the deal. It allowed Captive-Aire to accelerate its West Coast startup plans.

"We were originally looking at 2007," Luddy said.

Captive-Aire's plant in Redding will ship product to eight Western states, Luddy said.

Hourly wages for most employees in Redding will start in the "double digits" with a benefits package that includes health insurance, vacation and 401(k) retirement plan, Luddy said. He declined to be more specific.

Captive-Aire bills itself as the nation's top manufacturer of commercial kitchen ventilation systems, including hoods, exhaust fans and electrical controls.

The company employs some 600 people and has manufacturing plants in Youngsville, N.C., Muskogee, Okla., and West Union, Iowa. Captive-Aire also has 55 sales offices, including two in the San Francisco Bay area.

In 2005, Captive-Aire's sales reached \$150 million.

Luddy has tapped Knauf Insulation's former Shasta Lake plant manager, John Sabol, 48, to run the Redding operation.

Knauf in 1996 assigned Sabol to oversee construction of the \$130 million fiberglass insulation plant. The Ashby Road facility is Knauf's only West Coast production and distribution plant.

"Knowing we would be so far away, we wanted somebody with an excellent track record and experience in the area," Luddy said.

After leaving Knauf Insulation in March 2004, Sabol took a temporary job with the city of Redding as an ombudsman, helping builders navigate the city's planning process. The position lasted until November 2004. Sabol was working for fiberglass maker Johns Manville in Ohio when Luddy lured him back to Redding. Sabol said his background as an ombudsman has helped Captive-Aire in its startup process.

"I already know who the contractors are, who the vendors are," Sabol said.

Captive-Aire could add another 20 people to its work force in Redding within "a few months," Sabol said.

#### Job information

Captive-Aire Systems will accept job applications for its new plant in Redding through Monday. Interested individuals can contact the SMART Business Resource Center at 246-7911.

"Beyond that, we have to see how the plant does and how the business cycle is," Luddy said.

Captive-Aire was started in one room in 1976. The company has been shipping to the West Coast for 20 years.

Jim Zauher, president of the Economic Development Corp. of Shasta County, said he first contacted Luddy three years ago.

"We stayed in touch. As the business cycle changed and things started heating up in the economy, it became apparent he needed more capacity," Zauher said.

Captive-Aire's arrival in Redding is an example of how Shasta County can compete with other areas for manufacturers.

"As much as California gets a bad rap for its business attitude, when people come to visit here they see a different kind of attitude," Zauher said.

Redding Electric Utility spokesman Pat Keener said Captive-Aire will get a 25 percent rate discount its first year. The discount will drop 5 percent annually over five years.

In addition, the Redding City Council will be asked to waive about \$5,000 in permitting fees for Captive-Aire, Keener said. Reporter David Benda can be reached at 225-8219 or at [dbenda@redding.com](mailto:dbenda@redding.com).

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