



News Release

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

BENDIX MARKS 15 YEARS IN BOWLING GREEN, KENTUCKY

Major Investments in Wheel-End Operation – the Plant, People, and Community – Contribute to Robust Growth, Leading Industry Position, and Status as a Top Local Business

AVON, Ohio – Oct. 19, 2022 – The story of the manufacturing facility at 346 Central Avenue in Bowling Green, Kentucky, is one of investment and growth. And pride. This month, the state-of-the-art production plant – home to the wheel-end operation of Bendix Commercial Vehicle Systems LLC (Bendix) – celebrates its 15th year in the vibrant green fields of South Central Kentucky.

The Bowling Green plant opened in October 2007 to manufacture the full lineup of Bendix® foundation brake products, including air disc brakes and foundation drum brakes, as well as automatic slack adjusters, spring brakes, and friction. At its opening, the facility occupied 187,000 square feet and employed 133 people working one shift. Since then, Bendix has invested tens of millions of dollars in production capacity and equipment. From its humble beginnings, the facility today occupies 432,000 square feet and employs more than 500 team members covering three shifts.

Bendix's Bowling Green operation consistently delivers the industry's most effective, efficient, and forward-looking wheel-end solutions, advancing commercial vehicle technology and helping to enhance highway safety. At the same time, the plant regularly records quality, production, and workplace safety achievements – while prioritizing the well-being of its employees. Bendix has also established itself as a valued hometown supporter and leading member of the business community during its decade and a half in Bowling Green.

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“Our roots run deep in Bowling Green,” said Wade Watson, Bendix vice president, manufacturing, and former plant manager at Bowling Green. “It’s our home. We have made major investments in our plant, our people, and our community. We are proud to be a part of Bowling Green, proud to be a part of a dynamic global company, and proud to reach this milestone anniversary – yet another step in our strong and sustainable future.”

Strategic Investments, World-Class Standards

The philosophy at Bendix, which is part of Munich, Germany-based Knorr-Bremse, is to continually assess and reinvest in its manufacturing operations. Bendix is dedicated to maintaining its facilities at world-class standards for its employees and customers.

“When you look at the Bowling Green plant, there’s no denying that it is a world-class operation,” Watson said. “We’ve applied our most advanced methodologies when it comes to automation, logistics, and maintenance activities. It’s well maintained and includes amenities such as a medical center and gym on-site. And it’s climate-controlled, which is very rare, especially when you’re doing fabrication and machining in the building. It’s also well lit and efficient. We’ve invested a lot to make this facility what it is.”

Most recently, the plant underwent a major update in the form of a 130,000-square-foot expansion. Completed in 2020, the addition will increase air disc brake (ADB) production capacity to keep pace with accelerating customer demand in North America. The company expanded on nearly 8.5 acres immediately adjacent to the facility’s 302,000-square-foot building, a leased space the company purchased as part of the investment.

Among other improvements in support of Bendix’s ADB portfolio, the expansion added a new bracket weld machine center, a third ADB production line, four ADB caliper machining centers, and engineering test capability.

Bendix also incorporated an on-site medical clinic and wellness center. In addition, the company held space in reserve to address long-term growth opportunities. The facility enhanced the operational side of the business as well by adding six docks, three recycling compactors, 100 spaces in an enlarged parking lot, and a driveway for more efficient truck routing to and from the building.

Best Practices

For years, the Bowling Green plant has applied best practices in shipping to Bendix customers, enabled by an advanced IT infrastructure. The 2020 expansion further improved on the plant’s shipping operation, dedicating 40% of the site’s increased footprint to the shipping

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and sequencing process inside the facility – growing the dedicated area for these activities to four times its previous size. The highly orchestrated operation is built to help ensure customers receive exactly what they need, precisely when and where they need it.

“A big portion of the expansion was dedicated to the shipping and sequencing process,” Watson said. “Because, as you can imagine, it takes more space to be able to stage and pack all of the products in a way that is exclusive to the customer demand.”

The enlarged shipping area further enhances the plant’s ability to meet not only current demand for ADBs, but also increased demand as volumes continue to grow.

“The original shipping and sequencing area was set up to accommodate 400,000 ADBs per year,” Watson said. “Our new space, responding to a very different business demand, will allow us to ship up to five times that amount annually.”

ADB production is a defining characteristic of the Bowling Green operation. In 2009, when foundation drum brakes dominated the industry landscape, the plant produced 23,000 ADBs. As the market has moved to ADBs in large numbers – a hockey stick-shaped upturn – Bendix Bowling Green has responded in kind to the sharp upward trajectory. In 2021, the plant marked 4 million ADBs produced.

Quality Products, Produced Safely

Bendix’s strategy of ongoing investments, Watson pointed out, has contributed to quality achievements at the Bowling Green operation. High-profile commercial vehicle manufacturers have consistently recognized the work done there. In 2022, truck maker PACCAR bestowed its coveted 10 PPM award on Bowling Green for production in 2021, recognizing the facility – for the fifth time – as a premier supplier that meets its rigorous benchmarks for lowering product defects, expressed in Parts Per Million (PPM). The 10 PPM recognition means that for every million parts produced, fewer than 10 contain defects that reach the customer.

“The first day you come to work in Bowling Green, you learn just how critical what we do is to the safe operation of Bendix-equipped trucks and school buses,” Watson said. “We’ve implemented a range of tools to help us ensure product quality – and that’s enabled our team to be proactive and adopt a solid, proactive continuous improvement attitude.”

While placing a premium on manufacturing quality products, the Bowling Green operation focuses equally on producing them safely, in keeping with Bendix’s corporate zero-injury goal. The facility recently experienced a breakthrough in its workplace safety performance: The plant has lowered its Total Case Incident Rate (TCIR) of recordable injuries to

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0.86 – far below the industry average – after recording 2.6 for five years running. TCIR measures the total number of recordable injuries per 100 workers per year.

“We made major process changes to how we manage safety,” Watson said. “To be at the volumes we’re at, that improvement is incredible. We’re processing more product, with more people and more logistics movements – and fewer and fewer injuries. It’s one of the most meaningful accomplishments that the plant has delivered through cultural change.”

Community Values

The culture of safety goes hand in hand with Bendix’s long-standing commitment to helping employees and families improve their health and wellness at work, at home, and in retirement. A robust wellness program is in place at the Bowling Green facility. It is part of an active, multifaceted, employee-focused company culture that combines opportunities to learn, grow, and participate in health and wellness, employee team-building activities, and community volunteerism.

As it is through the rest of Bendix, supporting the local community is embedded in the culture at the Bowling Green facility. Leadership and employees are active community supporters, participating on local boards and donating their time and resources in service to local charities. These include Stuff the Bus, which collects school supplies for kids, and the Salvation Army Angel Tree Program, which gathers Christmas gifts for children.

“There’s a high degree of involvement from the plant,” Watson said. “We’re putting not only our name, but also our time into action to help the community thrive.”

That presence helps Bendix rank as a valued community member. The company is a leading member of the business community as well.

“We’re considered a top-tier employer, which is another big accomplishment for the organization in this very industrious business community,” Watson said. “There are a lot of plants in the 250- to 500-employee range, so it’s not easy to be part of the top tier. We have a strong relationship with the Bowling Green Area Chamber of Commerce, having worked closely with that group on investment packages and opportunities in employment and education. Our 15 years in Bowling Green are only the beginning. We look forward to the next 15 years – and many beyond that.”

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Milestones and Accolades

- **2007** – Facility opens following the consolidation of Bendix’s Frankfort, Kentucky, plant and the Glasgow, Kentucky, plant of its former joint venture partner, Dana Corporation. Production begins October 31, 2007.
- **2011** – Air disc brake production line expands, including an automated production line and 34,000 square feet of new space that triples the plant’s assembly capacity.
- **2012** – Another round of capital improvements delivers capacity expansion and new equipment for air disc and drum brake production.
- **2014** – Recognized among the top two worldwide manufacturing sites as part of the 2014 Knorr-Bremse Excellence in Global Truck Production rankings.
- **2015** – Recipient of the Bowling Green Area Chamber of Commerce Expansion Award, for an expansion that created 90 new full-time jobs. Bendix earned the same award in 2011 for the plant’s addition of 221 full-time positions.
- **2017** – Green to Gold Award received from the Bowling Green Area Chamber of Commerce for energy-saving improvements, including completion of a facility-wide retrofit lighting project.
- **2019** – Received the Worksite Wellness Council of Louisville’s Platinum Award, the highest distinction for exceptional commitment to employee well-being.
- **2021** – Completed the 2021 ISO 14001 external audit cycle for the regulatory requirement focusing on environmental management systems.
- **2022** – Earned the PACCAR 10 PPM quality award, a recognition that places the operation among the truck maker’s elite group of suppliers that meet its demanding quality expectations – marking the facility’s fifth year receiving the honor.

About Bendix Commercial Vehicle Systems LLC

Bendix Commercial Vehicle Systems, a member of Knorr-Bremse, develops and supplies leading-edge active safety technologies, energy management solutions, and air brake charging and control systems and components under the Bendix® brand name for medium- and heavy-duty trucks, tractors, trailers, buses, and other commercial vehicles throughout North America. An industry pioneer, employing more than 4,400 people, Bendix – and its wholly owned subsidiary, R.H. Sheppard Co., Inc. – is driven to deliver the best solutions for improved vehicle safety, performance, and overall operating cost. Contact us at 1-800-AIR-BRAKE (1-800-247-2725) or visit bendix.com. Stay connected and informed through Bendix expert podcasts, blog posts, videos, and other resources at knowledge-dock.com. Follow Bendix on Twitter at twitter.com/Bendix_CVS. Log on and learn from the Bendix experts at brake-school.com. And to learn more about career opportunities at Bendix, visit bendix.com/careers.

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