

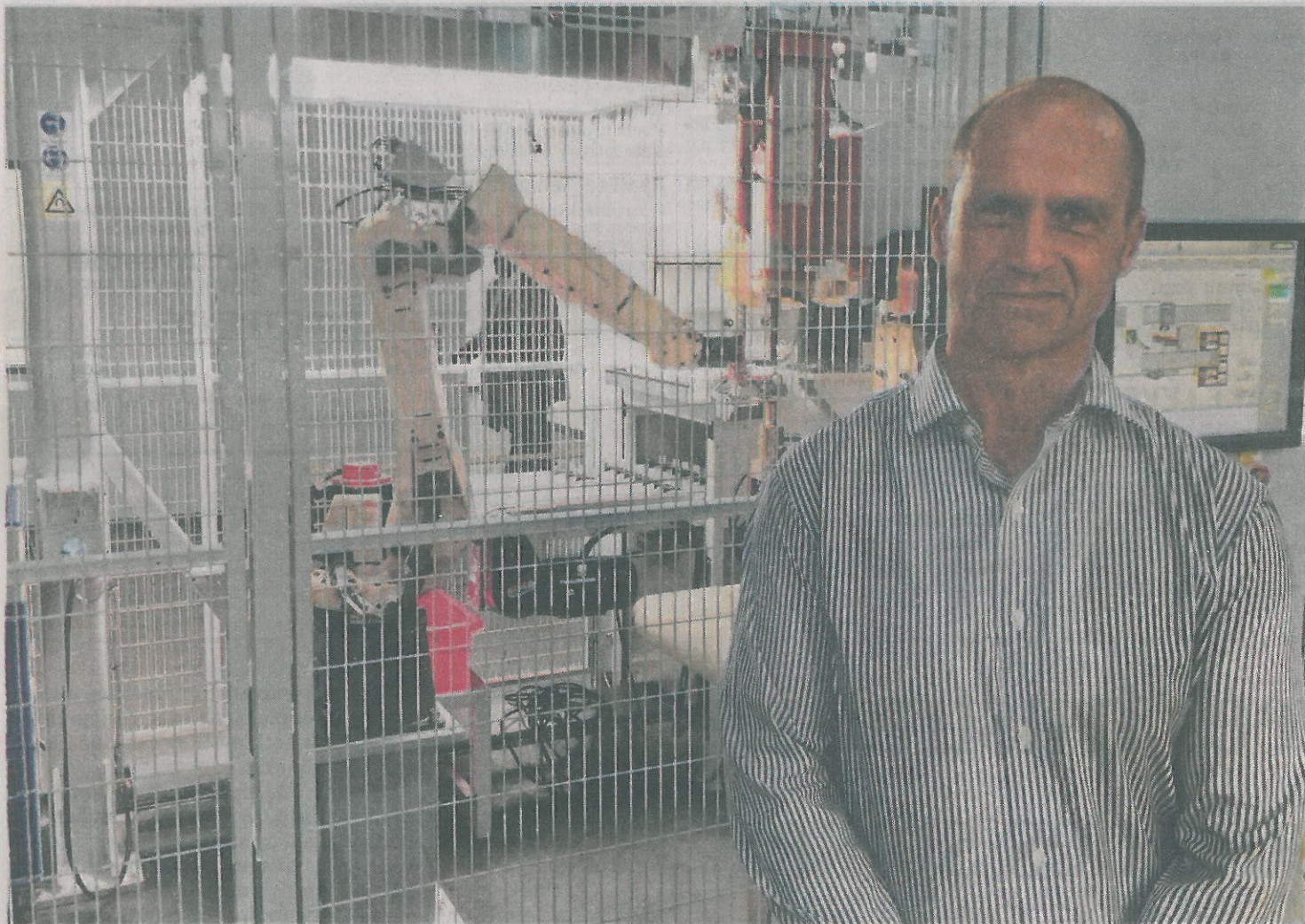
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MOSTLY SUNNY 93 • 69 FORECAST, A2

SATURDAY, SEPTEMBER 28, 2019 | Orangeburg, South Carolina



GENE ZALESKI, T&D

Gnotec Inc. General Manager Johan Westerberg stands in front of one of the plant's robotic assembly machines.

Swedish auto supplier opens Orangeburg plant

Gnotec Group to employ 78

GENE ZALESKI
T&D Staff Writer

A Swedish automotive supplier cut the ribbon on its Orangeburg County plant on Friday.

It is the company's first North American plant.

"It is a big step for us to enter here. This has been a really fast journey," Gnotec Group President and CEO Jorgen Oldenstedt said.

The atmosphere is fantastic, he said.

"I really feel like family when I come here," Oldenstedt said.

Gnotec Group is going to invest \$5.9 million and create 78 new jobs over the next five years at the plant.

Its 30,000-square-foot production facility is located in the Carolina Regional Park off of U.S. 601 near Interstate 26.

The building formerly housed flooring company Mohawk Industries Inc. It is expandable to 50,000 square feet.

Gnotec will use the facility initially for warehousing and then manufacturing operations focused on welding and product



SPECIAL TO THE T&D

Gnotec, a Swedish automotive supplier, cut the ribbon at its new Orangeburg plant on Friday.

assembly.

The company is receiving tax incentives from the county, including a fee-in-lieu of taxes agreement and special source revenue credits.

The company will be taxed at a 6 percent assessment ratio at a rate of 370.1 mills for 30 years. The typical assessment ratio for businesses in South Carolina is 10.5 percent.

The Central South Carolina Alliance helped to facilitate Gnotec's arrival in the county.

Alliance President and CEO Mike Briggs said Gnotec's arrival is the story of a world-class

company and world-class community coming together.

"It is truly what economic development is about. This is a community that will embrace you and do whatever they can do to ensure your success," Briggs said.

Oldenstedt said, "We have other plants in other places but we have never ever been introduced to meeting an organization and received support like this."

"Everyone has been helping out in various ways," he said.

Gnotec General Manager Johan Westerberg said the com-

pany will receive bulk material from Europe and then customize the parts for automobiles.

"We are providing bodywide parts to the automobile industry," Westerberg said. "Volvo is one of the main customers and we are hoping the other big one will be a customer as well. The other one in Spartanburg: BMW."

Gnotec will weld parts using robotic technology.

"By doing this, we are really ensuring the piece coming out is correct," Westerberg said. "That is the main reason for automation. Everything is advanced. The technology that will be utilized is the latest."

Westerberg said the company is ready to begin official operations but has not fully ramped up as of the end of September.

The company expects to have about a dozen employees by the end of the year. It plans to add more each year after with plans to be up to about 78 in less than five years, Westerberg said.

"Orangeburg has a good location," Westerberg said. "It is between Volvo cars and BMW. It is close to I-26 and close to the port."