

New Construction Projects

Scanner Magazine – January 2008

South Mississippi Electric is taking great strides to better meet the responsibility of delivering affordable, reliable power to its members in the coming decades. Several major projects at plants Morrow and Moselle, the headquarters facility and the new Field Operations Center (FOC) will continue through 2008.

“We’ve made significant investments in our facilities, mainly to increase and improve the capabilities of our employees to do their jobs,” says General Manager Jim Compton. “The total cost of all the projects will be more than \$33 million. When they’re finished, our employees will have the space, technology, equipment and work surroundings to deliver results like never before.”

By far the largest project is the new Henry Thomas FOC, located approximately four miles north of South Mississippi Electric’s headquarters, just west of highway 49 on highway 42. The site covers 60 acres (compared to 16 acres at the headquarters complex) and will feature a new warehouse, office space, a vehicle maintenance shop, pole yard, conference rooms and meeting space, and an outdoor pavilion. It will also be the location for backup IT and control center facilities, two emergency generators, a 100,000 gallon water tank, and a 400 foot tower that will add significant redundancy and capability to the Association’s overall microwave and communications system.

More than 50 field employees will work out of the new facility, including the line and substation crews, supply chain personnel, relay techs and the land section. They are expected to move into their new location in February.

“We simply needed more work space for so many employee groups,” says Marcus Ware, assistant general manager. “Not only will the FOC be a state-of-the-art facility technically, it will be convenient to all of our operations and increase our efficiency.

“The FOC will also serve as our primary headquarters during storm restoration or other emergencies. It was designed to allow room to stage outside crews, accommodating all their logistical and materials needs. We’ll use the conference room as a command center whenever the need arises and can function independently there for as long as necessary.”

South Mississippi Electric employees have occupied the current headquarters location since 1973 and it has seen substantial growth, to the point of having nowhere left to further expand. Once the move to the FOC is complete, work will begin on renovating and upgrading the existing headquarters buildings.

The main building will receive a complete renovation and new offices will be added. The control center and bulk power operations will move to the existing warehouse building, where it will have more space and upgraded operations technology and security, allowing it to meet any future regulatory

requirements. The whole site will also be served by a new geothermal HVAC system. (More details will be covered in future Scanner editions.)

Several enhancement projects were recently completed at Plant Moselle, where much of the office space and internal work areas had remained virtually the same since the plant was brought on line in 1970. A reception area, meeting rooms and new offices were added to the plant's front façade. Inside, both the lab and the instrument and electrical (I&E) shop were expanded and renovated. The control room was also renovated to make better use of existing space, create a separate shift supervisor's office and upgrade lighting and air conditioning.

"The extra room has allowed us to be much more efficient with our normal tasks," said plant manager Chris Rhodes. "The new layout is much more functional and comfortable. We've had people working in temporary spaces for some time, so now everyone has a home and we have room for future needs.

"Our security systems have also been upgraded, which is a continuation of work we've been doing since 9/11. We added a new guardhouse and card access system at the front of the main building, as well as expanding our security camera system throughout the facility."

The new improvements were dedicated August 29, 2007 in honor of Jack Thompson, former plant manager at Moselle and one of the Association's longest serving employees.

The final piece of the overall plan calls for a new training center to be built at Plant Morrow to house new meeting and training activities. Space currently used for those activities in the main office building will be converted into additional offices. That project began in December and is scheduled to be completed by July. At its dedication, the building will be named in honor of Marcus Ware.

"These are ambitious projects that have required significant planning by a number of people," says Compton. "That is what we're all about, though—seeing the needs, determining how best to meet them, setting goals and accomplishing great things. I have no doubt, from the standpoint of facilities, that we'll be perfectly positioned to serve our customers well into the 21st Century."