

Thomas Built Buses is ramping up production and adding 50 jobs

*By Fran Daniel
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HIGH POINT -- Thomas Built Buses Inc. is stepping up production and adding 50 jobs companywide, the company said Wednesday.

Kelley Platt, president and chief executive, said that Thomas Built Buses had exhausted its list of employees who had been recalled to work when production began ramping up again, and posted the new positions in January. Most of the jobs are for production workers.

"We are just in the process of hiring people now, but we have stopped taking applications," Platt said at the company's Saf-T-Liner C2 plant.

Thomas Built, based in High Point, has about 1,300 employees.

Platt also said that the state plans to buy 1,251 school buses this year, of which 968 will be Thomas Built buses.

"We are glad to see the state spending their tax dollars here at home because it means lots of jobs here, as well as with our major suppliers," Platt said.

Thomas Built also released information about a recent fuel economy evaluation of a Thomas Built Buses SAF-T-Liner C2 bus compared with a competitor's IC Bus CE Series. The company commissioned the test from an independent company, Bosch Automotive Proving Grounds.

According to the test results, the Thomas Built C2 had better fuel economy than the IC CE Series, which after factoring in the cost of diesel exhaust fluid, added up to an annual operating cost savings of \$603 to \$1,417 a bus.

"The test results exceeded our expectations," said Jed Routh, the product-planning manager for Thomas Built.

Thomas Built was also recognized Wednesday by the N.C. Department of Environment and Natural Resources as a 2011 Environmental Steward.

The award recognizes Thomas Built's superior environmental performance, commitment to continued reduction of its environmental impact and demonstrated commitment to exceed regulatory compliance.

Dee Freeman, the secretary of the department, said, "Companies like Thomas Built Buses show that industrial success and environmental stewardship can go hand-in-hand.

"It is commendable that even after the company achieved its goal to send no waste to the landfill, it is reaching even further to reduce the amount of non-recyclable trash sent to a waste-to-energy facility, through employee awareness and education and materials substitution," Freeman said.