

## **DOW TABS FREEPORT FOR PLANT**

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**FREEPORT** — In the midst of massive investments overseas, Dow Chemical Co. announced Tuesday it will build a new plant in Freeport to the tune of 500 new construction jobs, Dow officials say.

The new technologically advanced chlor-alkali plant will cost about \$900 million, said Dow Texas Operations Vice President Gary Hockstra.

"This is a great vote of confidence for our site and the community," Hockstra said. "The company does not invest in anything that's not a 25- to 50-year investment."

The seven-year, 100 percent tax abatement offered by Brazoria County Commissioners Court seems to have swelled the Dow board of directors' confidence. It was the deciding factor in Dow choosing Freeport's Plant B for its new facility, Hockstra said.

"We have alternatives to where we put that investment," he said. "The county commissioners made a good incentive for us to invest here. It made the area competitive."

Dow announced plans to build similar chlor-alkali plants in Saudi Arabia and China in 2007.

"When you see so much money going overseas, it's nice to see this size of an investment in Freeport," Dow Texas Operations spokeswoman Tracie Copeland said.

The chlor-alkali facility will produce chlorine, an important base material. Most of the chlorine will be used in Dow's epoxy production or sold to the nearby Shintech plant, Hockstra said.

Construction should start later this year with the plant's planned start up scheduled for 2011, Hockstra said. As the new facility is brought on-line, several aging chlor-alkali plants in Dow Texas Operations will be closed, he said.

Without the new facility, there would have been lost jobs with the closed plants. The new facility makes the switch "job neutral," which means there will neither be a net drop or gain in the number of jobs at Plant B, Copeland said.

"We're shutting down facilities built 30 to 40 years ago," Hockstra said. "This new plant is our latest and greatest, most efficient technology. It will take a lot less energy to make a lot more chlorine.

"In the long term, we'll save money by being more efficient," he said.

Pct. 1 Commissioner Donald "Dude" Payne, a Dow employee for 22 years who worked in some of the chlor-alkali plants that will close, said since the abatement was passed two months ago, he was starting to get unnerved by the delay.

"I'm glad the board of directors saw the need to put the plant down here," Payne said. "I was getting concerned because it took so long for them to make the decision."

Payne said it was good to see the system work.

State Rep. Dennis Bonnen, R-Angleton, also praised Dow's investment in his district.

"That's the kind of investment we need in our community," Bonnen said. "It will grow our tax base and employment."

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