

MARS INC. OPENS PLANT IN KANSAS



Candy manufacturer Mars Inc. has opened its first plant in 35 years in Kansas, according to CBS News.

A grand opening is scheduled for Thursday for company officials at the \$270 million chocolate plant. Officials from the company said that the plant was built from demand in the United States for the company's M&M's and Snickers candies.

The plant was constructed south of Topeka and has the ability to produce 14 million bite-sized Snickers candies each day. It will also be able to produce 39 million M&M's, which can fill 1.5 million fun-sized packs.

"It's just unbelievable, the production," said Topeka Mayor Larry Wolgast.

With the construction of the plant come new jobs. The facility, which is 500,000 square feet, will bring [200 new jobs](#) to the Topeka region. The company is also planning to open a store in downtown Topeka in the coming weeks.

Kansas Governor Sam Brownback finds it fitting that Americans will receive some of their favorite snacks from heartland of the country. Local and state officials are beaming over the opening of the plant because it chose Topeka over several dozen other areas in the country.

Matt Hudak is an impulse foods analyst for market researcher Euromonitor International. Hudak said that candy makers will continue to see annual growth of chocolate sales stay over the three-percent mark. Hudak also noted that Mars continues to introduce new products that help to keep consumers interested in their brand.

Hudak said that chocolate continues to be an 'affordable luxury' even when the economy can be uncertain.

"There is little reason to suggest that, all of a sudden in the U.S., people will start to dislike chocolate," he said.

The president of Mars Chocolate North America, Debra Sandler, said the following prior to the plant opening, "We have been growing, and we see future growth. We need the capacity."

Mars Chocolate, the chocolate unit of the company, is headquartered in New Jersey. It employs 16,000 people in 21 countries. It produces some 29 brands including Snickers and M&Ms. The company said that Snickers and M&Ms are billion-dollar brands. The company also has the brands of Twix, Milky Way and 3 Musketeers.

Mars Inc. is family-owned and it also has the Wrigley division. Wrigley is responsible for producing gums, chewy candy and hard candy. The company also produces non-candy products, such as pet foods. It also operates pet hospitals.

The last new plant constructed by the company was in Cleveland, Tennessee before this one in Topeka.

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