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## Top Story

### Richmond gets up to 200 jobs

By Julie Peacock/Richmond County Daily Journal  
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BST Safety Textiles, a division of Narricot Industries, will bring up to 200 jobs to Richmond County in the next three years, Richmond County and North Carolina state officials announced Thursday.

BST develops automotive airbags, including manufacturing the materials used for their production.

The jobs will be primarily for technicians, weavers and material handlers. The company estimates the average income will be \$29,000 not including benefits. The average income in Richmond County is \$24,480 without benefits.

"This is a testament to the pro industry environment we have created in Richmond County. It is an affirmation of the cooperative efforts taking place between the state of North Carolina, Richmond County, the development team and our other allies to lure this facility to Richmond County," said Kenneth Robinette, Richmond County Commission chairman.

The company is expected to invest \$35 million over the next three years and plans to locate in an existing section of Burlington Industries in Cordova. Renovations are already under way at the facility and equipment will be delivered soon, said Rob Deutsch, BST vice president of human resources.



International Textile Group (ITG), Burlington's parent company, and Narricot are owned by the same investor group, W.L. Ross & Co., but operate separately.

The Richmond facility will manufacture side air-curtains. The industry is expected to expand if roll-over requirements are created in federal automobile safety regulations, said Frank Goehring, Narricot's chief operating officer.

"The growing demand for airbag products presents tremendous opportunities for us and we look forward to becoming an integrated part of this community," Goehring said.

BST received a grant of \$200,000 from the One North Carolina Fund grant and Job Development Investment Grant (JDIG). These grants require a match of local funds.

The Richmond County Commission will discuss a local incentive package for BST Monday night at its monthly meeting, said Rick Sago, county development director. "It's good news for Richmond County."

The JDIG agreement will establish a nine-year grant for the company which could be worth up to \$1.37 million if the company creates all the jobs in the agreement and sustains them for nine years.

"Narricot's decision to open a facility in North Carolina brings more good-paying jobs to the people of Richmond County," Gov. Mike Easley said. "This shows our investments in education, worker training and infrastructure provide a business climate that encourages companies to build successful partnerships with our state."

Deutsch said three other sites were considered before the company selected Richmond.



"Richmond County provides a highly skilled workforce and access to excellent community services to assist with training and recruiting," Goehring said.

Hiring will begin immediately, Deutsch said. The company will advertise in local papers and use Richmond Community College as a resource. Deutsch said the company also hopes to hire prior ITG employees.

In September, ITG announced it would lay off 75 workers at the Burlington facility and was changing from three eight-hour shifts to two 12-hour shifts.

"All involved in economic development work agree that the strongest growth can occur from within the existing community of industries. While this is somewhat different than the typical growth from within, this new company does help a significant group of citizens who have training, experience and a history in the textile industry ... I think this new company can stabilize the International Textile Group's presence in Richmond County," said Jim Haynes, Richmond County manager.

Partners who worked to make this announcement possible were N.C. Department of Commerce, Richmond Community College and Progress Energy, Sago said.

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