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# Chemical plant will bring jobs to city

*By Matt Hawk Staff Writer*

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TUSCALOOSA | A partnership between Hunt Refining Co. and Louisiana-based Gaylord Chemical Co. LLC will make Tuscaloosa the world's leading producer of two chemicals widely used in the agricultural, pharmaceutical, petrochemical and electronics industries.

The Tuscaloosa County Industrial Development Authority on Thursday unanimously approved \$837,804 in ad valorem and sales tax abatements to assist Gaylord in the \$27 million relocation of its dimethyl sulfoxide [DMSO] plant from Louisiana to Tuscaloosa.

The plant, which will be adjacent to the Hunt refinery on Fairlawn Road in west Tuscaloosa, will go online in 2010. It will be fed by a DMSO precursor, dimethyl sulfide [DMS], from a second plant on Hunt's property, currently under construction as part of the refinery's \$675 million expansion. This plant will use methanol to transform hydrogen sulfide, a waste product from Hunt's oil

refining process, into DMS.

Both chemicals have a range of uses and are in high demand.

Despite this, Paul Dennis, president of Gaylord Chemical, said only a few companies worldwide produce the substances.

"We kind of think of [DMSO] as a boutique solvent," Dennis said. "We're the only people in the entire Western Hemisphere to make the product."

DMSO is not considered toxic. DMSO has powerful properties as a solvent and is easily absorbed into skin, so it is sometimes used in medical treatments. The federal government has not set an occupational health exposure limit for DMSO.

Dennis said more than 50 percent of the company's product is exported to overseas buyers. He said previous manufacturing techniques depended on waste products from the paper industry and can no longer keep up with global demand.

"Right now, we're pretty well sold out," Dennis said.

He said the partnership with Hunt will eventually create 27 jobs, including 10 salaried positions, and boost Gaylord's production of both DMS and DMSO by 70 percent to roughly 70 million pounds per year.

Ronny Rhodes, IDA review committee chairman, said Gaylord would generate about \$4.8 million in new tax revenue over the next 20 years, a nearly 6 to 1 ratio of taxes created to taxes abated.

Drew Altemara, spokesman for Hunt Refining Co., could not be reached for comment. But Dennis said the partnership will benefit Hunt financially also. He said Hunt uses the hydrogen sulfide waste product to produce elemental sulfur and sulfur compounds, a considerably more expensive process than manufacturing DMS.

"It costs them a lot of money to make that, so [the partnership] works out good for them," Dennis said.

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