

Applied Materials hiring 200 workers in Austin

Chipmaking equipment company is adding local jobs for first time in three years as sales rebound.

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Applied Materials Inc. is adding regular full-time jobs in Austin for the first time in three years, the company announced Monday.

The largest maker of semiconductor manufacturing equipment said it is going to add more than 200 jobs over the next three months, of which more than 100 will be new full-time positions primarily involved in manufacturing and logistics. The remaining jobs will be for temporary contractors.

Company spokesman Steve Taylor said Applied is responding to a strong rebound in global chip manufacturing, which continues to grow in strength.

"Hiring full-time workers is a sign that we have confidence that this expansion trend will last," Taylor said.

Applied, which was stung by declining sales and heavy losses in 2009, is seeing a turnaround for fiscal 2010, with sales up 76 percent in the first six months.

For the latest quarter, the company's sales of chip manufacturing equipment totaled \$1.4 billion, up 440 percent from last year.

Austin is the company's primary center for chip equipment manufacturing. Applied has 1,500 full-time workers and 750 contractors here. The company had about 2,500 full-time workers in Austin at the end of 2007.

As the global economic slump hit the semiconductor industry, Applied cut jobs and costs in the face of soft demand.

"We are planning for a long period of weakness," CEO Mike Splinter said in February 2009.

But now, business is bouncing back. Taylor said the semiconductor industry is expanding to keep pace with a rapid growth in portable consumer devices, a rebound in personal computers and increasing growth in automotive electronics.

Part of the chip industry's expansion is at Samsung Electronics Co., the world's second-largest chipmaker, which is adding capacity both in Austin and South Korea.

Samsung has started work on a \$3.6 billion expansion of its Fab 2 manufacturing plant in Northeast Austin that it expects will mean hiring 500 more workers. The chipmaker attracted 500 applicants to a Saturday job fair looking for experienced chip-factory technicians.

Samsung plans to get the second phase of Fab 2 into production next year.