

Punker to open fan plant in Hickory

Charlotte Business Journal by Ken Elkins, Senior Staff Writer

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Punker, a German fan and blower company, will hire 62 employees as it opens its first U.S. manufacturing plant in Hickory.

The company will spend \$4.6 million to equip an existing building near **Catawba Valley Medical Center**. Punker ruled out other locations in the Southeast and in Ohio in selecting the former Blackwelder building at 914 25th St. SE.

The jobs will pay an average annual wage of \$35,850, above the county average pay of \$34,216.

The company gets a \$78,100 grant from the One North Carolina Fund. Punker also is in the running for some local incentives.

In a statement, [Henning Baehren](#), chairman and chief executive of Punker, says the new location is close to key U.S. customers.

"Our work force, transportation networks and low cost business environment makes Catawba County particularly attractive to manufacturing clients," says [Julie Pruett](#), director of recruitment for the **Catawba County Economic Development Corp.**

Punker's fans, fan wheels and blowers are used in cooling systems, commercial ovens and in rooftop fans.

Punker is a subsidiary of Punker GmbH, which is based in a town north of Hamburg, Germany. The parent company, founded in 1954, employs more than 300 in the German factory.

Ken Elkins covers the counties surrounding Charlotte for the Charlotte Business Journal.