Economic fallout from Caterpillar could spread to South Carolina

BY CARLOS GALARZA
THE JOURNAL

Across the Georgia border in South Carolina, Richard Blackwell is tracking the activity spawned from the decision by Caterpillar to move a plant from Japan to near Athens, Ga.

The Oconee County Economic Development director believes the area can cash in on what he sees as a mega project with huge regional impact.

Blackwell recently alerted Oconee County Council to the potential of overflow business from Caterpillar coming to the county.

Blackwell told The Journal that he is collaborating with the South Carolina Department of Commerce to market Oconee's two industrial sites — the Golden Corner Commerce Park and Echo Hills — to suppliers that will be supporting Caterpillar's plant. He said these suppliers would be locating near Caterpillar, which is only about an hour away from Oconee.

"These suppliers may locate in Georgia, but they could also locate in South Carolina," Blackwell said. "We're the closest South Carolina county to the (Caterpillar) plant.

"We want these suppliers to know that not only Oconee County is a solution, but that South Carolina is a solution," he added.