

FlightSafety deal means BA jobs

by: D.R. STEWART World Staff Writer
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BROKEN ARROW — Executives of FlightSafety International Inc. and the city of Broken Arrow on Wednesday made official a long-term collaboration to construct a \$40 million, 370,000-square-foot plant that will create several hundred jobs.

Broken Arrow did not want to lose one of its most valuable businesses to another city, Mayor Mike Lester said.

FlightSafety, the New York-based flight simulator manufacturer and training company, wants to consolidate its Broken Arrow operations under one roof to increase efficiency, said Rick Armstrong, the company's vice president of simulation.

Lester and Armstrong signed a memorandum of understanding at City Hall that pledges the parties to a long-term growth plan.

The city will provide FlightSafety with a 17-acre site at the southwest corner of 71st Street and Lynn Lane Road on a 99-year lease at a cost of \$1 per year, city officials said. The site is below Tiger Hill, where Broken Arrow's water towers are located.

In addition, Broken Arrow will provide the company with \$6.6 million in infrastructure improvements or economic incentives, city officials said.

In return, FlightSafety is committed to construction of a 370,000-square-foot manufacturing facility that is 42 percent larger than its existing operations at 2700 N. Hemlock Circle, company executives said.



The larger facility is expected to result in a 45 percent increase in employment over the 687 people who work there now.

"Our investment will be over \$40 million in plant and equipment," he said. "We're projecting growth of employment to 1,000, so it will allow us to grow to a size to support the market."

"It will put all the Broken Arrow operations under one roof. Today, we're operating in four buildings."

FlightSafety owns 120,000 square feet of its campus on North Hemlock Circle and leases the remaining 140,000 square feet, company officials said.

Armstrong said the company will sell the facilities it owns and return the leased property to the landlord.

Lester said the city will finance and construct the water lines and utilities at the new plant site, which has been designated a tax increment finance district.

Increased property taxes at the new site will finance the infrastructure improvements.

Armstrong said the new site's benefits include easy access to the Broken Arrow Expressway, hotels and restaurants. Those services will support about 1,000 customers and visitors that FlightSafety hosts annually at its Broken Arrow facilities, Armstrong said.

"And that adds to the sales taxes in Broken Arrow," Lester said.

FlightSafety's operation in Broken Arrow has an annual payroll of \$55 million. The company, a unit of Omaha, Neb.-based Berkshire Hathaway Inc., spends about \$45 million a year in the community on components, supplies and services, they said.

"The city council said losing a business of this magnitude would take us many, many years to recover from,"

Lester said.

FlightSafety designs and manufactures full-motion flight simulators. It operates the world's largest fleet of advanced flight simulators at 43 facilities around the world, training more than 75,000 pilots, technicians and aviation professionals annually.

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Associate Images:



Broken Arrow Mayor Mike Lester (left) and Rick Armstrong, vice president of FlightSafety International, sign an agreement Wednesday under which the city and company will collaborate in building a \$40 million plant that will create several hundred jobs. SHERRY BROWN / Tulsa World

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