

New Fairbanks Morse Defense Doubles Manufacturing Capacity at Pascagoula Naval Propulsion Facility



PASCAGOULA, Miss. — Fairbanks Morse Defense (FMD) today broke ground on a third Center of Excellence (CoE3) at the Bird-Johnson Propeller Company facility in Pascagoula, Miss. The new center will effectively double capacity to produce the most complex and powerful naval propulsion systems.

The \$60 million installation includes a \$27 million U.S. Navy investment, \$22 million of which is sourced from Australia's initial contribution to the U.S. Submarine Industrial Base (SIB) under the AUKUS Pillar I effort. CoE3 will complement existing foundry capacity with the addition of 38,000 square feet of new manufacturing space, two new five-axis computer numerical control (CNC) machines equipped for parts weighing up to 100 metric tons (approximately 220,000 lbs.) and a machine-ready expansion slot for further growth. This advanced

capability will address current maritime industry capacity constraints and support submarine production and fleet readiness.

“CoE3 demonstrates the success of public-private partnerships in strengthening America’s economy and revitalizing our maritime industrial base at the local, state and national levels,” said Dan Rediger, FMD President of Power and Propulsion. “This groundbreaking comes at a critical moment for the industry. The timelines to deliver specialized propulsion systems for the Virginia-class submarine program and next-generation surface combatants are accelerating. We are proud to answer the call by expanding our ability to support vital U.S. and allied national security programs.”

The Pascagoula foundry upgrade will grow the workforce by 25%, employing a total of 100 highly skilled craftspeople. Once complete, CoE3 will support FMD training and apprenticeship programs and create new opportunities in high-tech manufacturing to strengthen the Gulf Coast economy and restore America’s defense industrial base.

“Fairbanks Morse’s continued investment in Jackson County speaks volumes about its confidence in this community and its workforce. This project is the result of strong, collaborative leadership between Fairbanks Morse, the Jackson County Board of Supervisors, and the Jackson County Port Authority, and it reflects the kind of partnership that makes major investment possible here,” said Mary Martha Henson, Chief Executive Officer of the Jackson County Economic Development Foundation. “What excites me most is what it means for our community and our region: more high-wage jobs, continued growth of our defense manufacturing industrial base, enhanced quality of place and further proof that Jackson County is a place where OEMs and major manufacturers choose to grow. This project continues to position Jackson County, Mississippi as the leader in the defense manufacturing industrial sector.”

The addition of two new five-axis CNC machines with 7-meter turntables brings the total machine count to four. CoE3 also modernizes legacy foundry capabilities with a dedicated manufacturing bay for a future 3D sand printer. The current and future design establishes a versatile, fully integrated manufacturing hub that encompasses design and casting through machining, finishing and delivery.

“Projects like this don’t just happen overnight. It takes vision, determination, and strong partnerships to bring investment like this home,” said Ennit Morris, President of the Jackson County Board of Supervisors. “This is a story about what local leadership can accomplish when partners work together. But at the end of the day, this is about Jackson County’s future and the jobs it creates, the families it supports, and the message it sends that our county continues to compete for, and win, major investment.”

As the only privately-owned U.S. foundry certified for large-scale Navy propeller manufacturing, the Pascagoula facility is designated a U.S. National Asset. The center will be operated as a Bird-Johnson Propeller Company facility under the executive leadership of Fairbanks Morse Defense. FMD acquired Bird-Johnson in July 2025 and restored the Bird-Johnson name to the foundry, honoring the company’s nearly 70-year commitment to American-made naval propellers.

The official groundbreaking coincides with America’s historic 250th anniversary, with new capacity scheduled to come online by Q1 2028.

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