

Press release

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Union Minière invests in the production of materials for the optical fibers industry in the United States

Union Minière has decided to invest in a unit to produce germanium tetrachloride (GeCl₄) in Laurinburg, North Carolina where UM already operates an extra-fine cobalt powder plant as well as a nanocrystalline materials production unit. The plant, with a capacity able to serve current and future needs of the North American market, will be operational by the end of this year. The investment highlights Union Minière's commitment to the optical fiber industry and will enable it to serve its North American customers even better than today.

The demand for greater bandwidth, quicker access to networks and to the internet has indeed boosted the demand for optical fibers tremendously. Today optical fiber manufacturers can hardly cope with the growing demand for optical fibers. Capacity to produce optical fibers has doubled over the last few years and will probably triple in the years to come.

Germanium is the key element added to the core of the optical fiber ensuring efficient transmission of light.

The major producers of optical fibers, including names such as Alcatel, Lucent and Corning, have plants in the United States all of which are located in or around North Carolina.

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PROFILE

Union Minière (UM) is an international metals and materials group, which strives to obtain leadership positions in selected markets. Its activities are centred on 3 main business groups: Copper & Precious Metals, Zinc and Advanced Materials. To ensure a rapid response to market openings, each business group is divided into several business units.

The UM Group has industrial operations in Europe, North America, Asia, Australia and Africa and serves a global customer base through an international sales network with offices in more than 25 countries.

The underlying principles of UM's strategy across the various business groups are a commitment to technological innovation, operational excellence, recycling and environmental responsibility.

The Group generated a turnover of EUR 3.8 billion in 2000. UM currently employs some 7,900 people.
