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Visalia company's warehouse expansion will add jobs

By Hillary S. Meeks

Thanks in part to the seemingly bottomless demand for Starbucks coffee, a warehouse expansion in Visalia's MidState 99 logistics park will add 145 jobs to the area.

The 252,040-square-foot- building will be leased by International Paper Company. The company is expanding operations because of a contract to make cups and lids for Starbucks, said Neal Vanderburg, plant manager.

The warehouse will serve as a distribution center.

"We just needed more room," Vanderburg said.

Ribbon cutting

It wasn't possible to expand the International Paper Company site at 1600 Kelsey Road, Vanderburg said, so company officials chose to put \$34 million into leasing the warehouse, which was built by The

Allen Group. The Allen Group will hold a ribbon-cutting ceremony at 11:30 a.m. today.

As a result of the move, 120 jobs can be added at the Kelsey Road manufacturing facility, Vanderburg said. Another 25 jobs will be created at the warehouse.

The expansion gives hope to Ricardo Noguera, housing and economic development director for the city of Visalia.

"I think there are a number of folks who have lost their jobs in the greater Visalia area, so I think by adding more industrial jobs, it's sort of balancing our economy," Noguera said.

Walking tours of the industrial buildings at the park, which is north of Goshen Avenue and west of Plaza Avenue, will be offered by The Allen Group after the ribbon cutting today.