

Huge Caterpillar dealership to be built soon in Eloy

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ELOY — There's been talk for months about a Caterpillar dealership coming to town. And just last month, words were put to action.

Dirt is being moved on the 150-acre site just east of the Toltec interchange with Interstate 10, off of Houser Road, for the dealership, owned by Empire Southwest LLC. The company chose Eloy as its next site to expand because of its prime location between Tucson and Phoenix.

"We are finally getting started," Executive Vice President Chris Zaharis said. "It's exciting."

Though the company is estimating ultimate

build-out of a 200,000-square-foot facility there to take place within the next 10 years, the first division is to be open by Sept. 1 in a temporary facility. It will be renting and servicing equipment and perhaps employing 10 people by the end of the year.

"We want to have presence like we do in a lot of our branch stores, where customers can buy and rent and get their machine serviced," Zaharis said.

The company offers agricultural and power systems, Caterpillar construction products, and paving and mining equipment, parts sales, machine rebuilding and service facilities,

mechanics rentals and an on-highway truck business. It's also the sole Caterpillar dealer in Arizona, southeastern California and northern Mexico. Other services to be offered at the Eloy location will be financing, product support, machining, hydraulics and training.

The company is family-owned, with its current CEO, Jeff Whitman, being a third-generation family member to lead the company. Besides its headquarters, which has been located in Mesa for 35 years, Empire has 16 other full-service locations, with another six planned for the near future. The company employs almost 1,700 and is ranked as the sixth-largest

privately held company in Arizona.

And, according to Zaharis and representative Mollie Trivers, it's about to get even bigger.

"This shop will be as large as our shop at our main campus. This is a big deal," Trivers said.

There are about 1,000 employees at the Mesa location in a facility of comparable size to the one under construction in Eloy. Ultimately, Eloy's site could employ several hundred, and "eventually, it may be our single largest location," Zaharis said.

The company is always looking for new hires. To apply, or to learn more about the company, visit the Web site www.empire-cat.com.