

Decatur, Alabama

Manufacturing Center of Excellence

Investing in Decatur

GE Appliances (GEA), a Haier company, continues to reinvest in its top-freezer refrigeration manufacturing operation in Decatur, Alabama with millions of dollars in 2022 to drive efficiency and expand capacity. This builds upon the **\$125 million investment GEA announced in 2020 to expand capacity by 25 percent**, making the plant a Manufacturing Center of Excellence for top-freezer refrigerators. GE Appliances is the largest employer at a single location in Morgan County with 1,500 employees.

2022 investment highlights include:

- ✔ **New state-of-the-art tools and equipment** focused on efficiency and innovation, including a thermoformer, which molds the drawers and interior of our refrigerators, maximizing output and lowering material and energy costs.
- ✔ **200 new jobs** added over the past two years.
- ✔ **We are reshoring** the production of two 21.9 cu. ft. top freezer models from China to Decatur.

Bringing the Factory of the Future to Alabama Today

GE Appliances uses digitization, 3D scanning and other new technologies to improve safety, quality, and manufacturing efficiency at Decatur and across its nine U.S. factories. Decatur's latest technology additions include:

- ✔ **Automated Guided Vehicles (AGVs)** to move materials throughout the factory.
- ✔ **More than 50 robots** perform heavy lifting operations, repetitive tasks, or ergonomically challenging jobs.
- ✔ **The most advanced fabrication equipment in the industry** builds a steel refrigerator case in seconds.
- ✔ The plant's **new common product architecture and redesigned assembly lines** give it the flexibility to build many different size models to meet shifting demands.



GE Appliances Refrigeration Plant in Decatur, Ala.

Preparing Tomorrow's Workforce

Upskilling and talent development remain a priority to prepare today and tomorrow's workforce for jobs in advanced manufacturing. Initiatives include:

- ✔ **Five-year partnership** with the Alabama Federation for Advanced Manufacturing Education (AL FAME). This program combines technical training and hands-on experience.
- ✔ **Partnership with Decatur-Morgan County Chamber of Commerce** to bring students and teachers into the plant to highlight career paths and opportunities in manufacturing.
- ✔ **Skilled apprenticeships** and co-ops.

Decatur Plant Leadership

Leifje Dighton was named Executive Plant Manager in February 2022. Leifje has provided 23 years of exceptional leadership at GEA, working in numerous areas of the business including Employee Health and Safety, operations, LEAN manufacturing, and material flow. Within GEA, Leifje is known as a transformational leader who focuses on the success of individuals and the business. Her contributions drive long-term business results and bolster the community and culture inside and outside the organization.

Leifje is a champion for women in manufacturing and an active mentor. She was awarded the 2022 Women in Manufacturing STEP (Science, Technology, Engineering and Production) Ahead Award from the National Association of Manufacturers (NAM), which recognizes the outstanding leadership and accomplishments of women at all levels in the manufacturing industry. She is also a mentor and recruiting committee member for Auburn Engineering 100 Women Strong, and leads supply chain Inclusion and Diversity at GEA.



Leifje Dighton, Executive Plant Manager, Decatur Plant Operations

*Among 16-22 cu. ft. refrigerators based on an independent study of property maintenance personnel. Source: The Stevenson Company, 2020—Market research company with over 20 years of experience in the appliance industry.