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NEW DOORS OPENING AT STREK-O

Abbotsford plant continues to grow with fire core production

By Karyn Eckert

It was four years ago this month that Alan Deiler purchased Streckert Manufacturing and renamed it Streck-O Doors. He set off with the goal to grow the business.

Now in 2008 Streck-O has expanded its operations and is positioned to continue growing.

Strek-O finalized an agreement in January with Skamol A/S, Nykobing Mors, Denmark, to distribute Fire Safe Products SafeCore in North America.

SafeCore is a lightweight mineral core for wood fire doors and is available in 45, 60 and 90 minute fire ratings.

The equipment to make SafeCore products was purchased from a plant in Chartierville, Quebec, and moved to Abbotsford this month.

Prior to buying the equipment and inventory in Canada, Deiler said Streck-O purchased ready-made fire cores to finish at the Abbotsford plant.

This new purchase will allow Streck-O to reduce the lead times on specialty fire doors to meet customer demand, Deiler said.

Strek-O is known in the architectural door industry for having the shortest turnaround on orders while providing good customer service and a high-quality product. Deiler said Streck-O can typically fill an order in two to three weeks, but its main market niche is to produce and ship in one week.

"That's somewhat unheard of in the door industry," he said. "Our customer service is well noted in the industry."

Deiler said in the past Streck-O couldn't get the fire core fast enough to keep up with orders. The new in-house manufacturing will solve that issue.

The focus on customer service, along with automation in the manufacturing process, has spurred growth in the Streck-O plant. Four years ago the factory was



FINISHING THE PRODUCT- Streck-O Doors employee Randy Zimmerman cuts a hole for a door latch near the end of the production line. Since 2004 Streck-O has grown from four employees and 25 doors per week to 25 employees and 500 doors per week. Fire core production will be added at the plant this spring.

TP staff photo

producing 25 doors per week with four employees. That number has now increased to 500 doors per week and a staff of 25 employees.

Streamlining the manufacturing process has made for more efficiency in the plant. Deiler said the business has received much help from Creative Automation in making a better manufacturing line. New equipment, such as vacuum door lifters, have made a two-person job like moving doors into one a single worker can do.

Deiler said this lean manufacturing concept increases efficiency and workflow, which resulted in their short lead times.

"We will continue to improve our process to meet our customer need," he said. "Safety is very important to us and the new material handling equipment will reduce injuries."

Part of Streck-O's growth is in fire core doors, which is a growing market due to changes in building codes, Deiler said.

The SafeCore manufacturing will take place in an

existing area of the plant which is under renovation to handle its new assignment.

Five or six new employees will be hired to work specifically in the SafeCore operation. Steve Hirsch, a 25-plus year veteran of the fire core component business, has been hired to oversee the SafeCore operation.

Deiler said it will start as a "pilot process" but he expects demand for the cores will be high. Production may quickly outgrow the space as Streck-O plans to produce cores for itself and to sell to other manufacturers.

"The plant this came out of is much larger than the one we have here," Deiler said. "Long term there's not enough floor space to handle the future growth of this operation."

As for the future of the SafeCore plant, Deiler said he is entertaining other areas in central Wisconsin for its location but his preference is to keep it on the Abbotsford site.

In addition to the SafeCore doors, Streck-O is expanding into other areas and looking

at even more. In the past few months they have begun manufacturing their own door moldings for their own use and to sell to others.

Deiler hopes to grow Streck-O into both a finished door

and door component manufacturer. It's possible the business may hire another three or four employees for machining and finishing doors at the plant.

As the business has grown, Streck-O has been able to offer more benefits to its employees. Deiler said wages have increased and a retirement contribution system was just implemented this year.

A larger staff has made room for students involved in the School-to-Work program. Deiler said Streck-O has had two students employed there, and both became full-time employees after graduation.

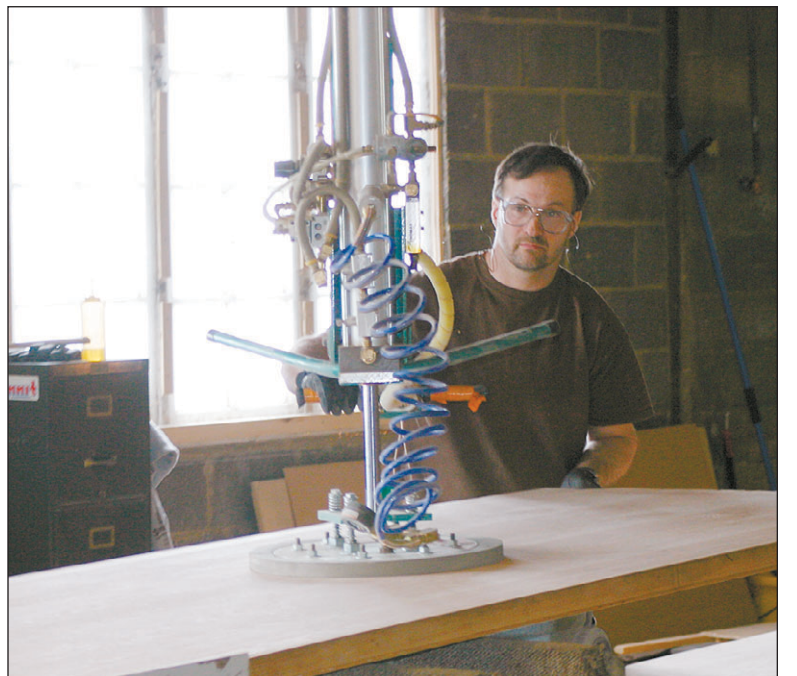
While students have worked in the plant, Deiler said the growth will allow students to work in accounting, sales or office positions in the future.

Deiler said the growth has been fast.

"It's like drinking water out of a fire hose," he said.

With the growth and changes in the plant Deiler said Streck-O Doors will be well-positioned for the future.

"We plan on 2008 being a good year for us," he said.



PLANT AUTOMATION- Streck-O Doors employee Dennis Schultz uses a vacuum-powered machine to move a door in the production line. Machines like these have allowed Streck-O to produce doors more efficiently and safely.

TP staff photo