

Trelleborg adds plant, buys firm in Brazil

By Mike McNulty

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STOCKHOLM, Sweden—Trelleborg A.B. is rapidly expanding its reach in Brazil with the addition of a new offshore product factory and the acquisition of a printing blanket manufacturing operation from Day Brazil S.A.

Brazil is a country Trelleborg is targeting for growth because of the nation's strong and expanding markets, including oil and gas, infrastructure, graphics and mining, said Peter Nilsson, Trelleborg president and CEO.

"As a result, we have made a group decision to increase our presence and customer support in the region," he said. Financial details weren't released.

Trelleborg employs about 1,000 at several factories and had 2011 sales in the \$183 million range in Brazil.

The company's continuing expansions in that nation will bring it closer "to the epicenter of events in selected segments, and closer to our existing and potential new customers," Nilsson said. "Both our production and technical support located in the country will expand."

Offshore gains

Trelleborg's newly constructed plant, spanning about 75,000 square feet, is located in Macae, Brazil. The factory will develop, manufacture and supply a complete product portfolio, a company spokeswoman said. That will include a wide range of high-performance, polymer-based products for offshore topside and subsea oil and gas exploration, such as insulation tape and buoyancy items.

The facility employs eight, she said, but when it is at full capacity it will have a work force of about 150.

Trelleborg is the first manufacturer to open a plant in the region, according to the spokeswoman.

"Our presence continues to grow, particularly in regions such as Brazil where

there have been major oil and gas discoveries," she said.

Featured at the factory will be what Trelleborg claimed is the world's largest hydrostatic pressure testing vessel for products used in deep sea environments.

"Following the major oil and gas discoveries that have been made off the coast of Brazil in recent years, it is a logical step to increase our presence and customer support in this key region," said Fredrik Meuller, president of Trelleborg Offshore and Construction, which is part of the Trelleborg Engineered Systems business.

He said the Brazilian market is a good place to be because of the long-term growth opportunities for the offshore product business.

"Trelleborg Offshore provides high integrity solutions for the harshest and most demanding offshore environments" using advanced polymer material technology, the spokeswoman said.

Trelleborg Offshore specializes in developing and producing polymer and syntactic foam-based seismic, marine, buoyancy, cable protection and thermal insulation products, as well as rubber-based passive and active fire protection solutions for the offshore industry.

Trelleborg Offshore has been providing a well-established portfolio of products to the industry for more than 30 years "and has the most advanced syntactic foam manufacturing facility in the world," she said.

Building base

The acquired printing blanket business, called Printec, has a strong presence in both Latin America and the U.S., operating out of a large production facility in Jandira, located in the metropolitan area of Sao Paulo, Brazil, another spokeswoman said.

Printec's 215,278-sq.-ft. factory produces a variety of polymer-coated print-



Drilling platforms such as the one above will benefit from Trelleborg's newest plant in Brazil that will produce polymer-based products for topside and subsea oil and gas exploration.

ing, sticky back and dual-core blankets, used in the offset printing business, she said.

About 160 are employed at the plant, the spokeswoman said, and no major management or work force changes are anticipated. Printec has annual sales of about \$38 million.

Purchasing Printec "supports Trelleborg's strategy to strengthen our leading positions within attractive and profitable market segments," according to Dario Porta, president of Trelleborg Coated Systems, which is part of the Trelleborg Engineered Systems business segment, one of three operated by Trelleborg.

"Printing blankets for the graphic industry is an attractive segment for us," he said, where several applications and

geographical markets, including Latin America, show steady growth.

He said the acquired business has a good lineup of advanced products and is profitable with the potential to grow further. "Via the acquisition of this local market leader, we have strengthened our position as a global leader and business partner in Latin America and the U.S.," Porta said.

The graphics industry is growing, according to the spokeswoman, "and an increased presence in South and Latin America is central to our growth strategy. Currently, we already rank as one of the three largest players in printing blankets in Latin America, a position we strengthened through this acquisition."

She said Printec also does considerable business in the U.S.

Noted scientist Alan Gent dies

AKRON—Alan N. Gent, University of Akron scientist and educator renowned for his work on the fracture mechanics of rubber and plastics and winner of the Charles Goodyear Medal, died Sept. 20 at the age of 85.

Gent was regarded as the foremost expert in his specialty, and his research yielded significant contributions to the world's understanding of the physics of adhesion and the fracture of rubbery, crystalline and glassy polymers, according to the university. His work had the potential of impacting nearly every rubber or plastic product developed today.



Alan Gent

Born in Leicester, England, he earned degrees in physics and math at the University of London, and received a doctorate there in 1955 on the mechanics of deformation and fracture of rubber and plastics.

At 17, he worked as a research assistant at the John Bull Rubber Co. and served in the British Army from 1947-49. He then became a research physicist and later a principal physicist at the British Rubber Producer's Research Association, where he initiated a program in engineering research.

Gent joined the University of Akron faculty in 1961 and spent nearly a half century at the school.

"Brilliant and unassuming, Dr. Gent was both a remarkable scientist and a remarkable man," said Stephen Cheng, dean of the UA College of Polymer Science and Polymer Engineering. "From the beginning of his ties to the University of Akron, it was clear he possessed an extraordinary knowledge of and passion for his field."

Cheng called him a visionary scientist and educator.

Gent had been assistant director of the Institute of Polymer Science, dean of graduate studies and research, as well as a researcher and professor. He also served as a consultant and scientific adviser to Goodyear's Research Division for 38 years.

He published more than 200 papers and book chapters, held three patents and frequently was invited to address university and professional society meetings.

Gent received the Charles Goodyear Medal from the ACS Rubber Division in 1990, and also the George S. Whitby teaching award. Among a number of other honors he received was the Colwyn Medal of the Plastics and Rubber Institute in 1978.

The UA trustees have renamed the Ohio Research Scholar Professor at the school in Gent's honor, now calling it the Alan N. Gent Ohio Research Scholar Professor of Polymers.

Vystar expands health care base

By Mike McNulty

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DULUTH, Ga.—Vytex natural rubber latex creator Vystar Corp. has acquired SleepHealth L.L.C. to give the company another avenue for expansion.

Based in Monroe, Ga., SleepHealth provides sleep lab management services to hospitals and physicians' offices in the Southeastern U.S.

Vystar will help SleepHealth expand geographically while SleepHealth gives Vystar a strong growth opportunity with access to the medical market through its customer base for Vystar's recently introduced bedding and pillow products, according to William Doyle, president and CEO of Vystar. Those include mattresses and mattress toppers made with Vytex and produced by Islatex, a sustainable business based in Guatemala.

Vystar and Islatex began collaborating in June on the production of 100-percent natural rubber latex foam material for use in bedding products made with Vytex.

The acquisition of SleepHealth also opens the door to move other offerings into the market from Vystar—the exclusive producer of Vytex, an all-natural material that contains significantly reduced levels of non-rubber particles and proteins found

in NR latex. Those products include gloves, cohesive bandages and similar offerings.

SleepHealth's customer base will be a good starting point to promote new consumer goods made with Vytex, including its TamicareFashion-Hygiene line of undergarments, condoms and other products, Doyle said.

"We're looking to get our foam products into the market," according to Joanne Kearney, Vystar vice president of marketing. "This gives us a foothold in the medical device industry."

Doyle said SleepHealth is a solidly run company "with national potential in a growing industry." The sleep disorder market has seen double-digit growth over the last several years, and is projected to reach \$5.8 billion in sales by 2015, he said, citing a Global Industry Analysts Inc. research report.

Duluth-headquartered Vystar has branched out over the last few years and has been building a line of products and partnering with manufacturers for production. The company said it will expand its business into two operations, the Vytex Division and the SleepHealth Division.

Vystar said it will maintain existing staff while bringing on board additional personnel as needed to allow for expansion.