



Mack makes machinery investments in response to medical market

By Doug Smock

Published: February 20th, 2013

Mack Molding (Arlington, VT) continues to see strong growth in its medical business as it ramps up investments and molding capabilities, said Jeff Somple, president of Mack's Northern Operations in an interview at MD&M West in Anaheim, CA last week.



He projects sales to medical customers to grow 12-15% this year "as a couple of big programs come out of hibernation." The product development pipeline for medical devices is often two years or more as OEMs get approval from federal regulators.

About 35% to 40% of Mack's Northern Operation sales are now in medical, says Somple. That is expected to grow to 50% in the next two or three years.

The company's historical roots are in large parts for the business equipment market. Mack was a regular prize winner in the Society of Plastics Industry's Structural Plastics Division

design competition in the 1990s. That design competition (and the Structural Plastics Division), ironically no longer exist. As recently as 1999, 75% of Mack's sales were in business equipment.

But the design and manufacturing capabilities in large parts have paid dividends for [Mack](#) in the medical market where there is demand for plastics cabinets and structural parts to replace heavy metal components. "And big, bulky components are still made here in the United States," adds Somple.

The company has also made a strategic shift to smaller parts used in medical applications. For example, Mack Medical last year formed a new business unit dedicated to orthopedics and disposable medical devices.

Mack also added its first cleanroom last year to meet rising medical demand, particularly for orthopedic applications.

The Class 100,000 cleanroom houses six Toshiba electric 110-ton electric presses. An adjacent whiteroom molding facility houses four Engel hydraulic presses—three 100-ton and one 40-ton. Also at Mack's headquarters plant is a Class 100,000 cleanroom for assembly.

Sample announced at MD&M West that Mack has made additional investments in its cleanroom capabilities.

"These investments, totaling roughly \$350,000, are in secondary operations that will primarily support our recently installed cleanroom for molding orthopedic and small medical disposable applications as well as enhanced software for managing medical manufacturing documentation and extended record-keeping."

A Mack press release listed these investments:

- Two variable-speed, portable gantry cranes. Each serves three presses with 1-ton hoists for rapid tool change.
- Three Wittmann Temprom plus D Vario high-pressure, water-based, dual-zone temperature controllers.
- KP-08 pad printer that can print up to five colors.
- 50-watt FiberMark laser system for permanent metal and plastic marking.
- ACT Desktop Machining Center for orthopedic applications, accommodating metal parts up to 12-by-8-by-6 inches in size.
- Fisnar desktop dispensing robot for a medical work cell for adhesives, liquid gaskets, resins and UV materials.

Mack has also added a Ranger three-axis Servo robot to a 2000-ton Cincinnati injection molding machine at its Cavendish, VT, plant to accommodate large parts. The robot has a 45-lb payload. Two Dri-Air portable dryers for wood-filled polypropylene resin have also been ordered.

A privately held company, Mack was founded in Little Falls, NJ in 1920. Annual sales are about \$300 million.

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