

Steppin' up

Passaic Rubber expands base with machinery acquisitions

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WAYNE, N.J.—Passaic Rubber Co. is expanding its belting capacity with the purchase of a large diameter electric autoclave and new belt-making machinery.

The additions were spurred by a surge in the belting end of Passaic's business during the last year, which created capacity issues, according to President and CEO J.D. Mathey.

The calendered rubber, endless belting and rubber roller producer "didn't want delays in our roller business, where we feature a lot of larger rollers," he said. "We needed to ensure that as both (rollers and belts) continued to grow, the company could match that growth with machinery."

Passaic's new electric autoclave, which is used to cure rubber for rollers and belts, is 48 inches in diameter and 25 feet long.

It increases Passaic's larger diameter capacity significantly and gives the company more options for its contract manufacturing business, Mathey said.

The belt building machines—both five

feet long, one with a 60-inch diameter and the other a 53-inch diameter—"give us the ability to make truly endless belts," he added.

Previously it could produce only belts that spanned four feet or less. The new machines open up a whole new venue of sales possibilities for the company.

"The machines are custom-built to our proprietary design," Mathey said. They also allow the firm to make better use of a 66-inch, three-roll calender purchased in 2003.

"Now I can feed these machines with wider material from the calender," he said.

The calender was needed to expand the firm's capacity, allow it to produce wider goods and give it greater versatility. It also purchased an 80-inch, two-roll mill at the time.

Wayne-based Passaic's new autoclave gives the company two electric and four steam autoclaves. It also fits into a better contingency plan should something go wrong.

"If the steam goes down we still have the electric, and if something goes wrong



Plant Manager Glenn Kuras (left) and Arnold Amar, who heads up the maintenance department at Passaic Rubber Co.'s facility in Wayne, N.J., discuss the workings of the company's new large diameter electric autoclave as it's being rigged up.

with the electric we still have steam," Mathey said. "No matter what, I can get our rollers and belts out."

In addition, the electric autoclave allows the firm to cure rubber for rollers or belting at night and be ready to go in the morning, he added.

Passaic does not expect to add personnel to its work force of about 28 to handle the new machinery because it has regularly added efficiencies in its production operation over the years, Mathey said. However, any further growth may mean staff additions.