

The Middlebury, Ind., facility will have a slear/multi-blanking line and a crimper/roll former for pattern applications.



The **NEXT** chapter

With a new facility slated to open in 2013, Champagne Metals looks toward the future

BY GRETCHEN SALOIS

As many companies find themselves reluctant to make big capital investments in expansions or equipment upgrades, Champagne Metals, Glenpool, Okla., is opening a new 80,000-square-foot facility in Middlebury, Ind. "Indiana not only affords us the markets that are in that area, such as the cargo trailer and pontoon marine markets, but also opens up processing in that area and gives us an opportunity to reach into other geographical areas, such as Canada and the Northeast, as well as, in some cases, a better global footprint,"

says Scott Easter, vice president of sales and marketing.

The Middlebury facility, which primarily will process aluminum products, is slated to be up and running by the end of the first quarter of 2013. The Herr-Voss Stamco 6-high leveler and cut-to-length line will provide customers with thicknesses ranging from 0.030 inch through 0.250 inch, widths from 12 inches through 80 inches and lengths ranging from 24 inches through 240 inches and longer. A slear/multi-blanking line will cover thicknesses ranging from 0.020 inch through 0.125 inch, widths 6 inches through 72 inches and lengths greater than

240 inches. The slear/multi-blanking line can make up to five cuts across the width of the sheet. The crimper/roll former at this facility will be used for pattern applications such as the painted skirting on pontoons. It can process thicknesses from 0.020 inch through 0.063 inch, width of 36 inches and lengths greater than 240 inches.

Initially, Champagne Metals decided to lease a facility and install a slear/multi-blanking line in Topeka, Ind. This location currently is being transitioned to the company's Middlebury location. Champagne Metals purchased 17 acres of land to serve as the greenfield site of the company's facility.

In addition, Champagne Metals added 30,000 square feet to support its 160,000-square-foot facility in Glenpool, Okla. where the company has invested more than \$1 million in material handling and logistics upgrades.

Easter says the next phase of growth will include upgrading the 75-inch cut-to-length line to 84 inches with edge slitting capabilities at its Glenpool facility, installing a slitter in Middlebury, which will provide the company with coil-to-coil capabilities; and adding a 100-inch-wide Herr-Voss Stamco 6-high leveler and cut-to-length line with edge slitting capabilities. After all

servicecenters

Setting up a facility in Middlebury with processing capabilities, including this Herr-Voss Stamco 6-high leveler and cut-to-length line, will allow Champagne Metals to meet customers' requirements.



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material as needed versus stocking sheet, allowing us the flexibility to offer coil on the floor cut to exact sizes. If they decide they need a different width or length, we are flexible whereas oftentimes that would’ve been an additional cost to them,” Easter adds.

With several of Champagne Metals’ tank trailer accounts, “we’ve been able to do the impossible,” Easter says. “We get material and cut and ship it out the same day.” The company has worked with other processors and had material cut and buffed and shipped out in days versus weeks through the normal process. “Normally when ordering from the mill, it might take weeks or months, but we can do things in hours or days,” Easter explains. “It’s part of the service Champagne Metals offers.”

The company’s cut-to-length line enhances the surface appearance of product from the mills, Easter adds. “The mills have documented from 27 percent to 60 percent in the clarity improvement for material processed on our line for certain products/applications,” he says. “We offer squareness with our edge slitting capabilities that is comparable to a pack saw product that is virtually camber free. This ability could help get rid of the squaring process that an end customer might have to do otherwise, thus eliminating the cost associated with that.

“From a processing perspective, the one thing we offer is improved recovery as opposed to mill processing material,” he continues. “We can do things in a shorter time frame than what the mills can offer; we are quick to react to situations and avert many problems that way.”

Champagne Metals continues to seek out new opportunities in the marketplace including a segue into consumer electronics. “We’ve been told by customers that we can do things no one else globally can do as far as the equipment capabilities and tolerances we can hold,” Easter says. With 26 years of industry experience, “it’s very refreshing to be in a company that has an open outlook toward future opportunities.” ■

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Champagne Metals is able to cut materials and ship them out in the same day.

the improvements are complete, the company will have the same capabilities at both its Middlebury and Glenpool facilities.

Garnering growth

Facility additions and upgrades are not the only changes occurring at Champagne Metals. The company has added four additional national account managers (two in Indiana, one in the Dallas area and one in the Pittsburgh area). Each is an expert in key markets, such as the marine and cargo painted products, commercial transportation markets, and general vicinity markets, including agriculture, livestock and horse trailers.

As personnel needs expand so do the areas where Champagne Metals is calling on customers. “The commercial transportation markets have really taken off for us, and we plan on continued growth going forward for processing,” Easter says. “We not only process for OEMs and service centers but also aluminum mills that are becoming a vital part of our customers’ supply chains.”

Proximity to customers is fundamental to Champagne Metals’ business. “What we’ve found here in Indiana is that there is a huge opportunity for the markets we like to sell into, and we’ve made the commitment to those markets by setting up a facility with processing equipment,” Easter says. “We compete with companies that may not have any processing equipment at all. We saw that as an opportunity to not only capture that market and make a commitment to the customer but also saw growth potential in other markets we were logistically challenged by before when we only had the Oklahoma facility.”

Selection of services

As Champagne Metals’ customers look to streamline processes, receiving just-in-time deliveries is of growing importance. “Instead of having someone bring in sheet product and set it on their floor, we can bring in coil versus sheet. In both our facilities, we will have the opportunity to cut