

Rulmeca rolls into new space

By Christina Haley O'Neal, posted Dec 14, 2018 on WilmingtonBiz.com



President Mike Gawinski stands in front of Motorized Pulley shells stored inside a newly built facility, which the company began leasing in August. Photo by Michael Cline Spencer

A Wilmington-based company that produces motorized pulleys for a variety of markets has moved into a new, larger space to meet an increasing demand for its products.

Rulmeca Corp. President Michael Gawinski and operations director Jay Graham have grown the company from its humble beginnings out of a shipping container and 700-square-foot office space in 2003.

Gawinski and Graham have been working together for more than 20 years. When Rulmeca approached them about starting the business, the two left Interroll to start the U.S. subsidiary in Wilmington.

Since then, the company's footprint has expanded with the business growth. The first expansion took place in 2005 with a move into a significantly larger facility in Dutch Square Industrial Park, Gawinski said.

"We've been growing and growing. The building we had before just wasn't cutting it anymore," Gawinski said of its Dutch Square operation. "We didn't have enough room."

That's why this year Rulmeca transitioned into a newly constructed, 20,000-square-foot facility in the Northchase Industrial Park. The company began leasing the space and started operations in mid-August, but held its official grand opening in late-October following some lag due to Hurricane Florence.

Italy-headquartered Rulmeca Group has 23 affiliates in 20 countries that supply rollers and idlers, pulleys and motorized pulleys. The Wilmington base is its U.S. affiliate and focuses on the motorized pulley segment. Motorized pulleys range from 3-inch in diameter to as large as 40 inches in diameter.

The Wilmington-based subsidiary assembles, repairs and distributes motorized pulleys for a wide customer base, including bulk handling markets such as iron and salt mining, construction, steel production and power generation, Gawinski said. The company also sells its pulleys to food producers and food equipment manufacturers, as well as to package handling equipment manufacturers. Rulmeca Corp. currently has 12 full-time employees working at the Wilmington site. To support Rulmeca Corp.'s expanded operation, the company is hiring additional employees.

The facility is 9 miles from the port and is within close proximity to major highways, both of which help the company for bringing in and send out parts and assembled products from its base, Gawinski said.

"Our sister company in Germany, they make all the parts that we buy, and we assemble maybe a third of what we sell through [Wilmington]. The other two-thirds comes from Germany to our customers. We use sea freight as much as possible using the Port of Wilmington. So, our location is very handy," Gawinski said.

Rulmeca Corp. is on track to hit a \$9.5 million revenue target this year, with about \$2 million of that business consisting of assemblies or repairs done in Wilmington.

The company does not sell to end users directly. It has more than 100 exclusive independent regional distributors and six independent representative firms to help sell the products. The company also has a large network of repair centers in the country, Gawinski said.

The company has a few customers in North Carolina, but the majority of its sales base is elsewhere in the U.S., he added.

Using computer numerical control (CNC) machining and hand-and-tool assembly, Rulmeca is able to produce and assemble more products at the Wilmington site.

"Getting a CAD [computer-aided design] operator who also can do CNC programming opened up many more possibilities to us," Gawinski said of the company's recent addition to its operation. "This [CNC machining] allows us to penetrate the food market to customize whatever we may need."

The company is looking to expand in the food processing market. In addition, it is expanding its in-house line in mid-2019, with a 3.15-inch diameter motorized pulley. This will eliminate the need to expedite the product from Germany since it has been increasingly in demand, Gawinski said.

The company currently averages about 14 motorized pulley assemblies or repairs a week at the new facility. By the end of 2019, the company estimates that it will be up to 24 pulleys a week.

LOCALIZING PULLEYS

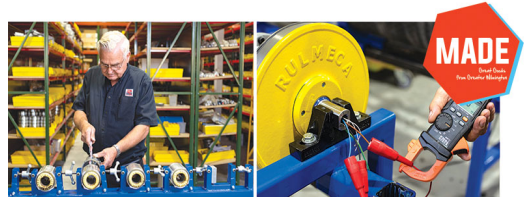
RULMECA CORP.

3200 Corporate Drive, Suite D

No. of employees:

12 employees in Wilmington; 1,200 employees throughout the international Rulmeca Group

Year founded: Rulmeca Corp. 2003; (subsidiary of Rulmeca Group, 1962)



Top local officials: Michael Gawinski, president; Brian Vrablic, sales and marketing director; Jay Graham, operations director

Company description: Rulmeca Corp. provides sales, local U.S. assembly and service for motorized pulleys utilized by conveyor system operators and engineers in a variety of industries.

Products made locally: Rulmeca Corp. sells internally powered and hermetically sealed motorized pulleys to drive belt conveyors. Products range from 3 inches in diameter to as large as 40 inches in diameter. About a third of the assemblies take place in Wilmington, as well as repair work.

Places of product distribution: Rulmeca sells primarily in the U.S., but also in Central and South America through independent distributors.

What made the company decide to make its goods locally? Gawinski: “When we founded the company in 2003, we knew we would have to assemble motorized pulleys locally to meet the schedule requirements of certain customers. Our first ‘shop’ was a shipping container. We moved to a larger facility in 2005 as our required rate of production increased. The move to our present location was necessitated by our ever-increasing required rate of production.”

What’s planned next? Gawinski: “Moving to a new, larger facility this year provides us floor space for growth. Our near-term plans include hiring more people and investing in more equipment (e.g. CNC machine for shaft making) as our required rate of production increases.”

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