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Bluestar Silicones Announces Major Investment in North America

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Bluestar Silicones, a global integrated silicones supplier, has announced investment plans to expand its manufacturing footprint and R&D operations in North America.

These investment plans include Bluestar Silicones acquiring a 147,000-sq-ft former textile chemicals factory in Charlotte, N.C., which will become home to the company's two manufacturing sites currently located in Ventura, Calif., and Rock Hill, S.C.

The new site, which sits on 19.4 acres, offers Bluestar Silicones significant room for growth to support its global five-year strategic plan to become a leader in the silicones industry.

"The sizable footprint in Charlotte will enable us to expand our manufacturing workshops, increase our laboratory space and give us significant room to grow in existing specialty markets and enter new markets," said J. Christopher York, president of Bluestar Silicones North America. "In addition, this investment will greatly improve our day-to-day operational efficiencies to become even more responsive to market needs."

The company also intends to increase staffing in sales, marketing, and technical service. Employment is projected to increase 25% in the next two years at the new Charlotte facility.

As part of the plan, existing manufacturing workshops will begin to be transitioned into the Charlotte site towards the end of this year. The company will take this opportunity to add a range of operational improvements to its processes, including statistical control and automation machinery wherever possible.

According to York, new process equipment will be purchased and installed at the new site for more localized manufacturing to support growth in key markets. In addition, bulk storage capability will be available at the new site to improve efficiency and assure raw material feedstock supply.

This investment also includes expanding Bluestar Silicones R&D capabilities in North America at the new site. Bringing R&D personnel together from Ventura and Rock Hill to Charlotte, combined with larger R&D laboratory facilities, new pilot equipment and increased staffing will offer customers improved technical responsiveness and faster product development.

Bluestar Silicones expects the transition for customers will be seamless in terms of supply with noticeable improvements in its manufacturing environment and operational efficiencies.

The company intends to produce its extensive range of silicone technologies at the Charlotte facility, including liquid silicone rubbers (LSRs), high consistency rubbers (HCRs), room-temperature vulcanized silicones (RTVs), fluids, dispersions, release coatings, specialty fluids, resins and antifoam, marketed under its Silbione(R), Silcolase(R), Silcollapse(R), Lyndcoat(R) and Bluesil(R) trade names.

Bluestar Silicones is already a strong player in paper release coatings and textile coatings for automotive air bags. The company seeks to accelerate its penetration of high-growth markets such as healthcare, personal care, and solar.

The new site is expected to be fully transitioned by mid-2013.

About Bluestar Silicones

Bluestar Silicones is a EUR600 million worldwide silicones raw material manufacturer established in 2007 through China National Bluestar Group's acquisition of Rhodia Silicones. The company is one of the world's leading fully integrated global silicones manufacturers with more than 50 years of silicone expertise. Bluestar has manufacturing operations throughout the world and combines upstream silicon metal operations and capacity with downstream silicone market and application development expertise. The company offers a comprehensive range of silicone products including release coatings, engineering elastomers, healthcare products, specialty fluids, emulsions, and resins. For more information, visit <http://www.bluestarsilicones.com>.

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