

Wentworth expands in Poland

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Wentworth Technologies Co. Ltd. has purchased a second tooling company in Poland, as it continues to make that country a low-cost launching point for its European expansion.

"The answer to China is Poland," Wentworth President Walter Kuskowski said in a Feb. 22 telephone interview. "[Labor] costs in Poland are equal to that of developed areas of China. It's part of our strategy to be a local supplier in Poland that offers global value."

In a late-January deal announced Feb. 22, Wentworth, based in Mississauga, Ontario, bought injection mold maker A. Trzaska-Poflansz S.C. of Bydgoszcz, Poland.

Trzaska's 30,000-square-foot plant is the second tool shop for Wentworth in Poland. The company bought a blow mold making plant in Poniatowa in 1997. Wentworth, through its Amhil Engineering Ltd. unit, also opened a thermoforming facility in Zarnowiec in November.

Amhil will use a section of the new Bydgoszcz facility to perform injection molding for its customers in Europe, President and Chief Executive Officer Bruce McNichol said on Feb. 28. The company will use the facility's 17 injection presses and add another press later this year, he said.

The facility is Amhil's first in injection molding and will make parts for a variety of food, consumer and automotive products, he said.

Wentworth bought the new mold-making plant when its founder, Anthony Trzaska, opted for retirement. The facility has about 70 employees in tooling and machining, and makes molds for packaging caps and closures and automotive parts. It has been renamed Wentworth Tech Central Sp.zo.o.

The shop will work closely with Wentworth-owned Electra Form Industries Inc., a maker of injection molds for PET bottle preforms and custom products. Electra Form will have an office in the Bydgoszcz plant, Kuskowski said.

The Canadian toolmaker also plans to invest about US\$4 million to upgrade the facility and bring in new equipment, he said. Large computer numerically controlled machining centers will be added to make molds as large as 15 tons.

Ark Wolos, Wentworth's corporate manager of technical resources, will move to Poland to manage the two tooling facilities there. About 90 percent of the molds made in Poland are shipped to customers in Germany, Sweden, France and other surrounding countries. Other tooling companies, both in the United States and Europe, are beginning to embrace Poland as an inexpensive manufacturing location. Tools can be produced at prices 10-25 percent lower than those made in North America, Kuskowski said.

Large French toolmaker Sermo Industries has a big mold-making complex in Poland, while other U.S.-based mold-component makers distribute products from the Eastern European nation.

Another firm, Superior Die Set Corp. of Oak Creek, Wis., wants to open a second plant in Poland, said Frank Janiszewski, executive vice president. The firm, which has a plant in Bytow, Poland, is negotiating to purchase another facility and hopes to move there in March, Janiszewski said.

"We're one of the few U.S. [mold equipment and parts] suppliers to manufacture there," he said. "It makes all kinds of sense from a cost standpoint, and we're very comfortable with the workers and the situation."

With the acquisition, Wentworth will have 14 tool-production plants. It expects tooling sales to reach US\$70 million in 2002, Kuskowski said.