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UNH Researchers Developing New Processes For Local Company

NHIRC Grant Supports Regal Sleeving and Tubing Efficiency Project

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DURHAM, N.H. – The New Hampshire Industrial Research Center (NHIRC) has awarded a grant to Regal Sleeving and Tubing of Newmarket to help support development of more efficient production processes by researchers at the University of New Hampshire.

Regal Sleeving and Tubing has been granted \$24,798 to support a proposed \$49,597 project at UNH. If the project is successful, the company estimates that 18 jobs will be saved with annual sales of \$2.5 million, according to Henry Mullaney, executive director of the NHIRC.

“If, as expected, the project leads to lower drying costs and/or faster drying times, productivity would increase while costs would be lowered. This could add many jobs for the production of the cost-sensitive product,” Mullaney said.

A 60-year-old company in downtown Newmarket, the former Suflex Sleeving and Tubing Company was saved from bankruptcy a year ago after it was purchased by the plant’s two managers. Prior to the purchase, Suflex had been losing money, but with help from the New Hampshire Manufacturing Extension Project (NHMEP), the two employees acquired the company, renamed it Regal Sleeving and Tubing, and turned it around.

“Sales have surged and the need to recapitalize the factory for future growth and stability is critical,” Mullaney said.

However, the company’s leased plant that houses the process for drying one of its key products, acrylic fiberglass sleeving, could be converted in the future. Replicating the drying process, which currently consists of five-story drying racks, is cost prohibitive.

Earlier this year, the NHMEP contacted the NHIRC about developing a new, more efficient and less costly chemical formulation and drying process. The NHIRC contacted UNH Professor P.T. Vasudevan in the Department of Chemical Engineering, who had success working with a similar product for D.D. Bean a few years ago.

“We have already started research on this project,” Vasudevan said. “We are troubleshooting the production facility in Newmarket and simultaneously setting up a small-scale research unit at UNH. At the end of the project, we expect Regal Sleeving and Tubing to have a state-of-the-art facility.”

L. Gerard Landry, president and one of the two owners of Regal, states. “As a 1977 chemical engineering graduate of UNH, it is good to be associated again with the UNH chemical engineering department. We look forward to having help from all involved in developing a new tower process that will help us secure Regal’s future.”

Located at UNH, the NHIRC was created in 1991 by the New Hampshire Legislature to provide a mechanism to promote applied and basic scientific, engineering, and associated marketing research and technological transfer to support improvements and efficiencies in the New Hampshire industrial and business community. The NHIRC is funded by the State of New Hampshire through its Department of Resources and Economic

Development (DRED).