

Lincoln plastics company adds molding press to make natural gas fuel cells

By Cole Epley / World-Herald staff writer | Posted: Monday, June 16, 2014 12:42 pm

Lincoln-based HTI Plastics just beefed up its manufacturing capabilities with the installation of a \$1 million plastics injection molding press, the largest the company has ever used.

The company manufactures plastic packaging and devices used in the medical and pharmaceutical industries. It also makes packaging for food and consumer products.

One of the press's most important features is its ability to manufacture large, thin-walled parts that will be used in natural gas storage units manufactured next door by Hexagon Lincoln, said Troy Just, president at HTI Plastics.

"This press allows us to continue pushing the limits of plastics manufacturing in partnership with this customer first, and then with others who need this capability," Just said.

Hexagon Lincoln, HTI Plastics' neighbor at the Lincoln Air Park, has grown significantly through the boom in domestic gas and oil production.

Hexagon in early May announced a joint venture with a California-based company to produce natural gas storage tanks for vehicles and is in the middle of a \$26 million expansion that will boost its employment from 290 in late 2013 to 360 employees this year.

"We're really excited about Hexagon because their projected growth is significant and we've been with them about 20 years," said Rick Thomas, director of sales at HTI Plastics.

Thomas said the size of the new press also gives HTI the capacity to make large plastic items like garbage cans and lawn furniture. He said there are no immediate plans to grow the company's workforce of 100 employees as a result of the new press.

HTI Plastics has historically derived more than half its revenue from medical and pharmaceutical customers. Other products include plastic gunstocks and crossbow stocks and packaging for animal health products.

HTI in 2010 completed a \$5 million expansion project that nearly doubled its space to 83,000 square feet.

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