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Window company to double workforce

By Gerry Gilmour

Integrity Windows and Doors is more than doubling the size of its Fargo manufacturing facility and workforce. "Demand right now requires that we grow," plant manager Brian Johnson said.

Johnson had an early and busy day at Integrity Tuesday. He was called to the company's industrial park facility just after 3 a.m. A fire burned up a switch gear in the plant's electrical transformer. The plant was up and running on power from its generator by the time workers began arriving for the 6 a.m. shift. That first shift worked overtime Tuesday afternoon until the 3:30 p.m. shift came on.

Johnson said the shifts are worked back to back this week to keep pace with product demand and build inventory going into the holiday weekend. Integrity, a division of Warroad, Minn.-based Marvin Windows, produces a full line of standard-sized windows and patio doors at its Fargo facility.

The Integrity products are built with Ultrex, a composite material manufactured by Tecton Products, which operates a nearby plant in the industrial park. Glass for the windows and doors, meanwhile, comes from nearby Cardinal IG.

Sales of Integrity's windows and doors have exceeded expectations. Its products are designed for northern climates. Integrity had just 45 employees and one product line when it opened here in 1995. Today it employs 240 in its 173,000-square-foot plant at 1616 43th St. N.W.

Construction begins this month on a 226,000-square-foot second building.

"It's a significant project and we're delighted," Fargo Mayor Bruce Furness said. "They're happy with Fargo and we're happy with them." Johnson said Marvin and Integrity officials late last year reviewed the plant's capacity and decided to move sooner rather than later on expansion.

"We looked at it and decided it was important to maintain capacity," Johnson said.

Olaf Anderson & Sons this week began staging equipment on the plant's west side. The Fargo company designed and will serve as general contractor on the job. Johnson said the pre-cast concrete building should be complete and operational by January 2001.

Elliot Larson, chief financial officer for Integrity, said financing for the second building is being secured through Norwest Bank of North Dakota. Integrity is also working with the Fargo Cass County Economic Development Corp.

Don Berg, vice president of FCCEDC, said there are three or four programs that might be applied toward the \$5 million-plus project. "We're very pleased that they're decided to expand," Berg said. "It's just a good, solid family company." Johnson said Integrity will double its workforce over the next five years as it brings the new building to full production capacity.

Integrity has hired 60 new people already this year and plans on bringing another 30 on board this summer. "We've been adding steadily all spring," Johnson said.

He said the company is finding high-quality employees, despite the tight local labor market, and its sub 2-percent rate of unemployment. Integrity pays competitive wages, has a profit-sharing program and maintains a clean workplace, he said.

"We enjoy being part of the Fargo community," Johnson said. "Our business is growing and the quality of the workforce is top-notch."