

# Plastics News®

MGS grows capacity for health care production  
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**WHAT KEEPS YOU UP AT NIGHT?**

Film extruder Laddawn takes unconventional route to growth  
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Precision Molded Plastics Inc., iStock photo

A camera crew visits Precision Molded Plastics Inc. in Upland, Calif., to shoot footage that will appear in a television pilot.

## LIGHTS, CAMERA, PLASTICS

Los Angeles molder may appear on a future TV show

**By Rhoda Miel**  
Plastics News Staff

The next workplace TV comedy may feature plastics, and if it does, expect to see California injection molder Precision Molded Plastics Inc. in a cameo appearance.

A production crew was at the Upland, Calif., custom molder shooting footage to use in a pilot about the human resources department in a New Jersey plastics plant for

the pilot episode of a show for Fox television on April 1.

There were no stars there for the half-day of shooting — the show is still officially untitled, although names such as “Plastic People” and “HR” have been mentioned. It would star Patton Oswalt as the “new eccentric CEO” of a New Jersey plastics plant and Judy Greer as the human resources leader.

But Jeff Schaffer, who is both executive producer and

director for the pilot, was there at Precision, taking advantage of the opportunity to learn more about plastics and the setting for the potential show.

“Plastics is something that everyone uses every day and never thinks about,” Schaffer said in a phone interview during a break while filming in Los Angeles. “I used to look at all these little things and knobs and parts of a lawn

See **Precision**, Page 19

## Conduit extruder replacing facility damaged by storms

**By Michael Lauzon**  
Plastics News Correspondent

Plastic conduit extruder Blue Diamond Industries LLC is moving into new digs within Middlesboro, Ky., to replace and expand operations damaged in storms in February 2015.

The firm is renovating a 75,000-square-foot facility a mile from its existing site to house nine extrusion lines being relocated, plus two new conduit extrusion lines that are on order. Blue Diamond expects the new plant will be ready for equipment installation by mid-June.

Blue Diamond produces high density polyethylene conduit up to 6 inches in diameter. CEO Sherri Simpson said in a phone interview that conduit production continued at a rate sufficient to meet customer demand after snow, sleet and freezing rain storms damaged the original facility more than a year ago. Offices, laboratory and maintenance areas were “totaled” in the storms and

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## Novolex adding capacity, new jobs in Florida plant

**By Jim Johnson**  
Plastics News Staff

Novolex is spending millions to expand its plastic bag manufacturing facility in Jacksonville, Fla.

The project, announced by Florida Gov. Rick Scott April 13, will bring at least 25 new jobs to the company's Hilex Poly brand production site.

Novolex has 43 manufacturing sites in North America and considered other locations for the expansion before deciding on Jacksonville.

“The equipment has been shipped down there. We will have everything installed probably in the beginning or middle of August,” said Mark Daniels, senior vice president of sustainability for Novolex. “It’s about a \$6 million investment to increase capacity at that facility by about 35 percent. More

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Daniels

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Footage from Precision will be used for transitions between scenes and an opening title sequence. The pilot stars Patton Oswalt and Judy Greer.

## Precision

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mower and parts of a water bottle and think: 'Someone makes these.' It made me very curious.

"It was very interesting going to Precision because I felt this is a company that makes all these things that I've been wondering about."

Precision, founded in 1979 by Ted VanVoorhis, began as an electronics specialist. Ted's son David VanVoorhis is now president and CEO, and the company works across a range of end markets, from medical and defense to consumer products.

Ash Brown, who oversees business development for Precision, helped coordinate the visit once location scouts for the TV production contacted the company.

"The first thing when you hear someone wrote a treatment for a show based on injection molding plastic company, you think 'what, really?' Then you think about it being the third largest industry in the country, and if people actually get to see some real stuff and actual machines and get educated about it, it should be interesting all around," Brown said.



Greer

Oswalt

Laura Steinel wrote the pilot and is a co-executive producer for the show. Schaffer said that as a New Jersey native, she wanted to set a show in a real blue-collar location. Plastics seemed to be perfect because it's used in so many ways.

While the show is not going to be filmed in an actual plastics plant, Schaffer said they have a set in a warehouse-type location with some non-functioning machines, conveyors and other equipment. Footage from Precision will be used for transitions between scenes and an opening title sequence.

Beyond the filming, though, he said it was important for him to get a better sense of what the industry was like.

"Think about it, if you're making a film called 'Lassie,' at a certain point you'd want to see a dog and see how one acts," he said.

Schaffer, who was more familiar with steel mills and auto plants, said Precision was a great introduction to what today's plastics plants are like, with good lighting, clean production and recycling scrap from production.

"This plant was clean," he said. "You could've eaten off the floors with the plastic utensils they were making."

The show isn't expected to dwell too much on the actual plastics production, but rather the variety of people who work there, Schaffer said, from people who are "super proud" to be there to others who see it just as a job.

There's no guarantee the show will end up on television.

Currently, the cast and crew are filming into mid-April, then will edit their footage and present it to network officials at Fox TV by the beginning of May. Schaffer said they expect to hear shortly after that if it's being picked up to air.

And if it is, there may be more opportunities for the general public to see more plastics.

"They've already asked us if they can rent gaylords of materials for a scene," Brown said. "[VanVoorhis] said, 'Well, we've never been asked for that before, but why not?'"

## Foam companies reunite in Ohio

By Catherine Kavanaugh  
Plastics News Staff

Ten years ago, parting was sweet sorrow for Progressive Foam Technologies Inc. of Beach City, Ohio, and Plymouth Foam Inc.

The two businesses shared space in Beach City until Progressive experienced rapid growth for its patented product, vinyl siding backed with foam insulation.

So when Progressive needed more room, Plymouth Foam, which serves mostly the packaging and building industries, left for a cleaned-up Superfund site 20 miles away, in Gnadenhutten, Ohio.

Now Progressive is growing again, due partly to a partnership with BASF Corp. related to its Neopor rigid foam insulation. Progressive needs more space and Plymouth Foam happens to have it. So the two companies are back under the same roof, this time at the 220,000-square-foot facility in Gnadenhutten, which Progressive recently bought for \$3.3 million.

"We've been looking for a way to put this back together ever since we took it apart 10 years ago," Progressive founder and President Patrick Culpepper said in a telephone interview.

He describes the business relationship as a "joint effort" rather than a joint venture. Progressive owns the expanded polystyrene block molding plant and the equipment. It leases space to Plymouth. There's no shared ownership. The companies retain their individual identities.

"While each of us buys the same kind of EPS resins and each of us expands those beads and each makes blocks, what we do with those blocks is very different," Culpepper said.

Progressive makes siding insulation — and batten and boards now, too — while Plymouth, which is based in Plymouth, Wis., makes foam blocks for various end markets but mostly protective packaging and building pan-

els for commercial and residential construction.

"We're the sole supplier of backers and bonding for insulated vinyl siding to this day in the U.S. and Canada," Culpepper said.

Going forward, Progressive's Beach City site will focus on shape molding while the Gnadenhutten site will be used for block molding and making Neopor products.

The big advantage of the "joint effort" is sharing costs and leveraging operational efficiencies.

"In today's world of EPS, we want to own world-class, top-flight equipment, which is very, very expensive," Culpepper said. "You need to run it 24 hours a day, six days a week to justify it. When neither operation is big enough to do that you're at a cost disadvantage in making your product. So this is a cost-saving, efficiency move with technology-sharing motivation."

Although the businesses operate separately, they share expertise in machine maintenance and engineering.

"It actually is a special thing," Culpepper said. "Most people in business don't trust each other enough to truly collaborate. It's a big miss."

Over the next 18 months, Progressive plans to make \$3.4 million in total capital expenditures between Beach City and Gnadenhutten, and add 25 jobs this year between the sites.

Plymouth Foam retains its 46 employees in the deal.

"Our presence there really secures those jobs in the location," Culpepper said. "Now that they have someone to share costs with, that plant becomes more economical and sustainable by virtue of having a good partner."

A lot of the Beach City employees want to transfer there, too.

"Half my workforce lives within 20 minutes of that plant and they are doing rock, scissors, paper to see who gets the opportunity to go there because of the shorter drive," Culpepper said.

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