

Helm Tool expands, buys equipment

By Bill Bregar

PLASTICS NEWS STAFF



Mueller

SOUTH ELGIN, ILL. (Sept. 21, 10:20 a.m. EDT) -- Helm Tool Co. Inc., an injection mold maker in Elk Grove Village, Ill., has added a 2,500-square-foot addition for mold assembly and invested \$1.75 million in two five-axis, computer numerically controlled milling machines, said President Helmut Mueller.

Helm Tool makes molds for plastic cutlery, and medical and automotive products, including hot-runner and stack molds. The company also makes tools for die casting.

Helm Tool exhibited at a technology conference at Battenfeld of America Inc.'s new headquarters in South Elgin. During the event, Mueller spoke Sept. 14 about global competition for toolmakers. Mueller protested the outsourcing of U.S. manufacturing to China, India and other low-wage nations, which he said has eroded living standards here.

To fight back, Helm Tool invests in equipment and its employees, he said.

"We have always looked ahead to better ourselves, educate and cross-train employees, stay with the trend of technology, purchase machinery to build and make ever-more complicated tooling ... [and] take the labor out of production," Mueller said.

In the mid-1990s, Helm Tool invested heavily in three-dimensional mold design. The company also bought high-speed machinery, wire electric discharge machines, sinkers with tool changers, a water-jet cutting machine and its first injection molding press to sample molds.

The latest machinery investment covers two CNC machining centers: one makes mold bases; the other, which make mold inserts, has a six-pallet tool changer.

The addition for mold assembly opened up space for the new milling machines, Mueller said.

Mueller, a native of Germany, founded Helm Tool in 1977.

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