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HEADLINES

Ladtech Manufacturing starts operations in Little Falls

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Lana and Dwight Wiedrich of Minneapolis have purchased the building that was formerly Integrated Molding in Little Falls. Their company, Ladtech Manufacturing, works with injection molded plastics. The company produces a variety of products, but its priority is the manhole adjusting ring.

"Dwight invented the manhole adjusting ring and received a patent for it in 1995," said Lana. "By stacking the one to four-inch rings, the manhole cover is raised to the level of the road. Our rings, made from recycled plastic, replace the rings made of brick, cement and mortar."

According to Dwight, the area between the manhole and the road base, called the chimney, have always been created by using cement rings or brick and mortar. He said it does not last much more than 15 years before replacement is necessary.

"A sewer environment creates hydrogen sulfate gas," said Dwight. "When the gas comes in contact with moisture, it becomes sulfuric acid. That acid eats everything it comes in contact with and turns concrete to powder. Everything except polyethylene.

"The gas rises and comes into contact with the rings," said Dwight. "Add to that vehicles pounding on the rings and they begin to crack.

"A deteriorated chimney will allow rain water into the sewer system," said Dwight. "When it rains, there is an increase of material that runs into the sewer and the treatment plants have that much more material to treat. By replacing the cement rings with polyethylene rings, it can save a municipality a lot of money."

Ladtech makes its products by injection molding. It uses 80 percent recycled plastic and 20 percent virgin plastic which have been ground up into pellet form. Those pellets are poured into a hopper, then into an area where the pellets are melted and forced through a nozzle, under pressure, into a mold.



Lana and Dwight Wiedrich, CEO and President of Ladtech Manufacturing show the polyethylene manhole adjusting rings they make. The rings come in several diameters and heights and don't require heavy equipment to handle which saves a city money.

The mold, also under pressure, is cooled and the product is then released from the mold. The bigger the item, the more pressure is needed to hold the mold in place. Ladtech has 19 machines that range from 300 tons of clamping pressure to 1,500 tons.

"By using manhole rings made by Ladtech," said Lana, "a city will see long-term savings. For example, it takes two people to set the 85 pound cement rings while it only takes one person to set the six pound polyethylene rings. One person can install an entire chimney.

"Even though a plastic ring costs more than one made of cement, there is ease of installation and the ability to immediately back fill of the area around the manhole," said Lana. "Crews don't have to wait for mortar to set. If properly installed, there will be no inflow of rain water. It costs a city about \$800 to \$1,000 to rehab a cement manhole chimney with labor, material and equipment. The life expectancy of a polyethylene ring is 75 to 100 years, alleviating replacement as often. Plus, temperature fluctuations won't affect the product."

"If a plastic grade ring breaks," said Dwight. "Ladtech will replace it at no cost. That's another cost savings to a municipality."

Ladtech used Integrated Molding in Little Falls to manufacture the polyethylene manhole rings. In 2003, it hired a manager to oversee the production and inventory which enabled Dwight and Lana to learn the injection molding process. They both learned to be manufacturers. In August 2007, Ladtech leased the property in Little Falls and on Jan. 1, it purchased the building.

"We are looking forward to doing business in Little Falls," said Lana. "We want the city to know we will remain here, grow and create jobs. We have joined the Chamber of Commerce and plan on being part of the community."

For more information, go to www.ladtech.com.