

PMPA Member Mueller Brass Co. Finds Success in Capital Investment and Product Diversification

At the turn of the century, Oscar Mueller followed in his father's entrepreneurial footsteps and convinced his brothers to build a factory in Port Huron, Michigan. In 1917, the Mueller Metals Co. was established with the primary purpose of manufacturing munitions to support the United States' efforts in WWI. These munitions and related products required extensive knowledge in brass rod, brass forgings and other alloy production.

After the war, the company evolved and expanded its manufacturing expertise into a variety of industries beyond ordinance and munitions, developing several high strength alloys and forgings for gears, bearings and pumps for mechanical devices and later brass valves and fittings for the plumbing and refrigeration industries. Mueller Metals was at the forefront of the innovation in various plumbing systems and flow control products, many of which are still used in domestic water service today.

Reflecting its growing competencies of alloys, the company changed its name to Mueller Brass Co. in 1924. Today, a century after its inception, Mueller Brass Co. has expanded its capabilities many times over. However, the company is still located in Port Huron, Michigan, and is still said to be considered the world leader in the production of brass rod, forgings, aluminum extrusions and other alloy products. Its products are now used to support a host of industries, including plumbing, HVAC, refrigeration, automotive, aerospace, defense and more. Since 1990, Mueller Brass Co. has been a subsidiary of Mueller Industries Inc. (NYSE: MLI) headquartered in Memphis, Tennessee. Mueller Industries Inc. employs thousands of people around the world with operations in the U.S., Canada, Mexico, China, South Korea, Great Britain and Bahrain.

"As one of Mueller Industries' cornerstone companies, financial strength has been an advantage," V.P. of sales, Joe Napolitan, says. "It has allowed us to grow in capital-intensive industries through acquisitions and investments in our manufacturing and technologies. As an example, a \$25 million investment was recently made in our Michigan rod and bar mills."

Another Mueller Brass Co. advantage is its market diversification, which helps the company to best manage soft economic cycles. This diversification also allows its workforce to cross-pollinate ideas amongst different departments to gain a broader understanding of all the markets the company serves. On any given day, their Port Huron mill may need to manufacture up to 15 different alloys for various different industries. Used to these types



of demands, Mueller Brass has manufactured brass rod and brass forgings in two separate, but complementing, operations for the past 100 years.

Adapting to recent regulatory changes in the plumbing systems is one of the brass industry's larger challenges today. Mueller Brass Co. understands the market's needs and continues to invest resources to help plumbing customers meet the demands created by lead-free standards. To overcome some of these challenges, the company developed their line of EcoStream alloys. These five low-lead and lead-free alloy products are now manufactured alongside their conventional alloys and are designed to be more economical and operationally compatible for its customers with lead-free brass needs. EcoStream alloy can be machined and recycled alongside conventional brass alloys, and do not contain impurities that exceed ASTM purity standards for C3600, C3770, C3450 and C3530 alloys.

As part of its ongoing commitment, Mueller Brass Co. continues to work with industry partners such as the PMPA and Copper Development Association to overcome challenges facing the industry.

As a PMPA member, Mr. Napolitan encourages his sales force to attend as many local meetings as possible. He says Mueller Brass Co. also benefits from PMPA's business trends reports and its ITR economic reports, which he says deliver "priceless" insight into the main drivers behind the business.

"PMPA provides us the opportunity to spend more time with our customers ... and you can never spend too much time with your customers," Mr. Napolitan says. "The back-and-forth exchange of ideas between members is important to help everyone understand the problems and challenges we all face."

Mueller Brass Co. has two locations at 2199 Lapeer Ave., Port Huron, Michigan 48060 and 302 Ashfield St., Belding, Michigan 48809. Phone: 800-553-3336.

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