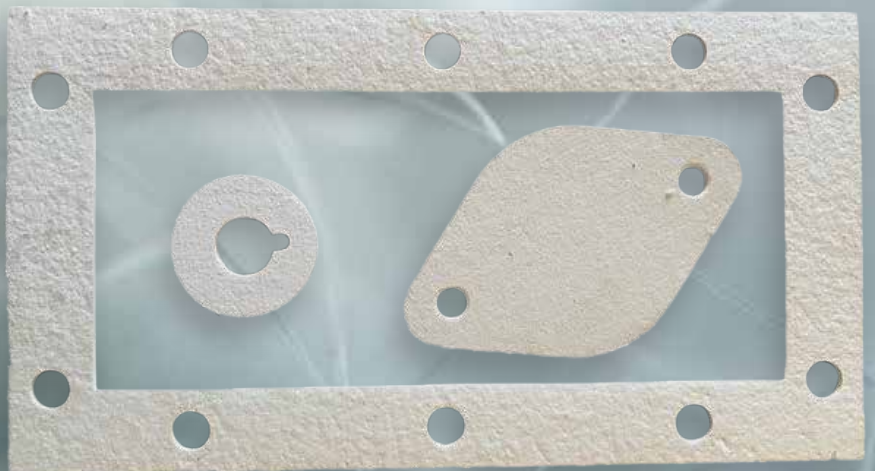


COMPANY PROFILE ///

CHIZ BROS.

***REFRACTORY
AND HIGH-
TEMPERATURE
INSULATION
EXPERTS***



For more than five decades, Chiz Bros. has offered a full arsenal of ceramic fiber products, coatings, bricks, mortars, and more to the metals, power, glass, ceramics, heat-treat, and other industries.

By **KENNETH CARTER**, Thermal Processing editor

Ceramic materials are key components in making sure furnaces retain uniform heating throughout each and every use. Without uniform heating, components — not to mention a company's bottom line — could be jeopardized.

Chiz Bros. has more than a half century of experience in supplying those critical ceramic fiber and refractory materials.

"We offer a full range of refractory and high-temperature ceramic fiber materials, with over 95 percent of these materials being made in the USA," said Mark Rhoa Jr., vice president of Chiz Bros. "We definitely are a predominantly ceramic fiber-based supplier, and that includes ceramic fiber and bio-soluble ceramic fiber modules, blankets, boards, ropes, and textiles. We do furnace-lining designs as well."

Chiz Bros. also does customized roll bungs and roll seals for annealing-type furnaces and roller hearth furnaces, according to Rhoa. Gaskets are also a large part of the company's production.

"We have our own gasket machines for the stamp and punch gaskets, so we're constantly doing those out of high-temperature insulation," he said. "And we do a lot of old burner blocks — maybe ones that have been discontinued or the company that made them has been long out of business. We can mimic some very old burner blocks if people are hesitant to switch over to new burners."

CONSTANTLY EVOLVING

Rhoa emphasized that Chiz Bros. is constantly evolving to meet the needs of the heat-treat industry. To that end, Rhoa said his company has helped to develop new higher-insulation fiber blankets that have been increasing in demand.

"It can be 10 to 15 percent more insulating, which has significant gas savings from a money standpoint, but also from a carbon footprint standpoint, which everybody seems to be feeling the pressure on these days," he said. "If there are customers who are looking to reduce their carbon footprint, we've got a whole little laundry list of things we can do to help them do that."

To that end, Chiz Bros. also offers ceramic fiber modules for electrically heated furnaces that are attached to electric heating elements, according to Rhoa.

"We do the full element and module supply, as well as the engineered drawings for that," he said. "That's been a big trend that we've seen in the heat-treat industry."

CUSTOM WORK AVAILABLE

A good portion of Chiz Bros.' business involves customers buying rolls of fiber for their needs, but as some heat treaters have been forced to reduce their workforce, Rhoa said some of them have outsourced more customized work to his company.

"We can custom-cut everything and help them save time," he said. "But there are some people out there who order 10 boxes a year, and we're just as happy to take care of those customers as we are the



Even though Chiz Bros. employs a "job-shop mentality," the company is also committed to investing in and embracing new innovations whenever possible. (Courtesy: Chiz Bros.)

people who want us to do a full engineered reline of their heat-treat furnace."

STAYING COMPETITIVE

With 30-35 employees, Chiz Bros. is a relatively small, family-owned business, but that doesn't deter the company from being competitive within the industry, according to Rhoa.

"We definitely punch above our weight — so to say — for being competitive against some of the big guys," he said. "We're not going to pinch pennies on customers. We're going to make sure they get the right solution. We're going to do what's right by the customer. Obviously, we'll hopefully make some money on it down the road per se, but we're not going to cut corners. We try to do business the old school way: just having our customers build trust in us and always being there to take care of them. We ship emergency orders all the time. We really pride ourselves on never saying no to an opportunity from a customer, always trying to be there to help them out, and always doing what we say we're going to do. And if something goes

wrong, we do whatever we have to in order to make it right.”

BALANCING THE OLD AND THE NEW

Even though Chiz Bros. employs a “job-shop mentality” in which the company fully embraces its blue-collar roots, Rhoa said the company is also committed to investing in and embracing new innovations whenever possible.

“We’re trying to be more efficient in the way we do things, put in effective processes, and invest in our technology and our machinery so that we can be as fast and efficient as possible,” he said. “We like to think we’ve got a good balance of the old school ‘get-it-done’ mentality, but we’re in an older industry, too, so we’ve got a good balance of old and young at our office. We’re trying to walk that fine line of keeping the old-school mentality but still evolving and constantly improving, whether it’s from a technology standpoint or just from a process standpoint with the younger generation.”

HANDLING CUSTOMERS QUICKLY

Getting new customers and meeting their needs involves several steps to ensure those requirements are handled as efficiently as possible, according to Rhoa.

“The first thing we try to do is always pick up the phone; if someone sends us an email on our website or whatever, we want to talk to them — even better if we can get there and visit them to see it; we want to be as hands-on as possible,” he said. “That helps us get all the information and take as much of the burden off our customer as we can. It starts with trying to be as responsive as humanly possible, because that helps you get all the information to get the right solution, but that quick response also builds initial trust. For long-time customers, that trust is usually there, but with newer customers, we want to build that trust quickly.”

During those immediate consultations, Rhoa said his team makes sure all the right questions are being addressed while providing examples of existing products that can potentially meet the customer’s needs.

“And even if someone’s got some crazy off-the-wall idea, there’s definitely been something similar done, so we’ve got that history,” he said. “And, depending on who’s talking to the customer, if we don’t know something, we’re not afraid to say, ‘Let me talk to someone a little smarter than me and make sure we get you the right answer.’”

GROWING THE COMPANY

With all it can offer heat treaters in the way of ceramic fiber, Rhoa said Chiz Bros. is expanding. In 2022, Chiz Bros. opened an office and warehouse in Detroit, Michigan, to support its customers in the area



Chiz Bros. is a ceramic fiber-based supplier; that includes ceramic fiber and bio-soluble ceramic fiber modules, blankets, boards, ropes, and textiles. (Courtesy: Chiz Bros.)



A good portion of Chiz Bros.’ business involves customers buying rolls of fiber for their needs, but as some heat treaters have been forced to reduce their workforce, some of them have outsourced more customized work to the company. (Courtesy: Chiz Bros.)

and have inventory readily available for emergencies.

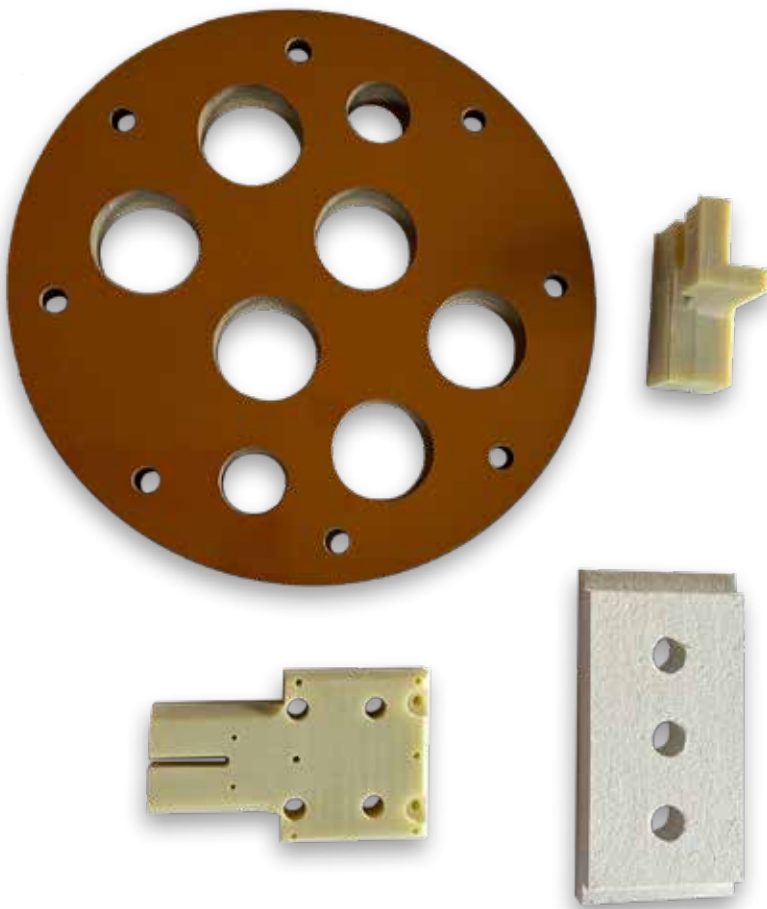
“That was a big undertaking for us,” he said. “We also recently bought a company called Advanced Material Science that has CNC capabilities for machined insulation. This purchase also allowed us to expand our offerings for the induction heating market through machined electrical insulation like Nema, Transite and Marinite.”

Chiz Bros. started in the late 1960s by Al, Ray, and Larry Chiz in Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania, as a contractor and materials supplier. In

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“Our primary focus is not on external contracting, but supplying materials, coming up with custom solutions to furnace insulation problems and doing engineered furnace drawings for full furnace relines or new furnace builds with the furnace manufacturers.”



Chiz Bros. does customized roll bungs and roll seals for annealing-type furnaces and roller hearth furnaces. (Courtesy: Chiz Bros.)



2015, with the last Chiz brother well into his 80s, Rhoa's father, Mark Rhoa Sr., took over the company, according to Rhoa.

“My dad had been there since 1997,” he said. “We have several employees with 30-plus years of experience who are either still working with us or have only recently retired. We preach the family environment. Everyone probably preaches that, but having ‘X’ number of employees hit those milestones either in retirement or to continue working, I think speaks volumes to that.”

Rhoa said Chiz Bros.’ primary focus has shifted, too.

“Now, our primary focus is not on external contracting, but supplying materials, coming up with custom solutions to furnace insulation problems and doing engineered furnace drawings for full furnace relines or new furnace builds with the furnace manufacturers,” he said.

LOOKING TO THE FUTURE

By offering much needed ceramic fiber products to the heat-treat industry, Rhoa said Chiz Bros. continues to be — and will continue to be — in a good position when it comes to its competition.

“We’re big enough where we can compete with the big guys, but we still add that personal touch where if you call Chiz Bros., you’re going to talk to a customer service rep that’s here in Pittsburgh, here in Detroit, here in the States, that will service you with USA-made material,” he said. “We’re family-owned, privately-owned, so we can make the right decision quickly. We don’t get bogged down in big corporate red tape, so we’re able to respond faster. Sometimes, we’re able to respond before someone else probably even opens up the email. As long as we keep that attitude and stay focused on customers, customers, customers, and our employees, we’ll continue to be effective.”

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MORE INFO www.chizbros.com