

COMPANY PROFILE ///

SECO/VACUUM | SECO/WARWICK

MAJOR MANUFACTURING EXPANSION



Sławomir Woźniak, CEO of Seco/Warwick Group, speaks at the unveiling of the Seco/Vacuum and Seco/Warwick's new Meadville, Pennsylvania, facility. (Courtesy: Seco/Warwick)

Seco/Vacuum and Seco/Warwick USA celebrate a big step toward moving a segment of their U.S. manufacturing operations into a new facility in Pennsylvania.

By **KENNETH CARTER**, Thermal Processing editor

In a continuing effort to ensure manufacturers in North America have access to its quality furnaces and other services, Seco/Vacuum and Seco/Warwick are relocating a portion of their furnace manufacturing from their headquarters site in Poland to a 120,000-square-foot manufacturing facility at their U.S. office in Meadville, Pennsylvania.

The unveiling of the state-of-the-art facility was made official at a recent presentation ceremony that included Pennsylvania Sen. Michelle Brooks; Rep. Brad Roae; Jim Becker, executive director of the Economic Progress Alliance of Crawford County; Brent Vernon, executive director of the Governor's Action Team from the Pennsylvania Department of Community and Economic Development; Sławomir Woźniak, CEO of Seco/Warwick Group; and Don Marteeny, VP/Engineering of Seco/Vacuum. A tour of the building's new features and amenities was conducted by the president of Seco/Vacuum and Seco/Warwick USA, Piotr Zawistowski.

ECONOMIC ADVANTAGE

The new facility, in addition to its core mission of offering its products directly to the North American market, is considered an economic boon for the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania.

In support of this development, Pennsylvania has awarded Seco/Vacuum and Seco/Warwick USA a \$2 million package of matching fund grants from the Department of Community and Economic Development through its Redevelopment Assistance Capital Program. The primary use and intent of the RACP funds is for reimbursement of eligible construction costs. Seco/Vacuum and Seco/Warwick USA jointly will match these funds on a one-to-one basis.

"Most of the manufacturing and assembly of vacuum furnaces have been done in Świebodzin in Poland, and there are obvious advantages to that in terms of scale and accessibility of components and supply chain, but there are also a few disadvantages as well," Zawistowski said. "We have companies in the United States who prefer to purchase from North American suppliers and having our own supply chain for components in the United States gives us an opportunity to leverage those better than if they were coming from Europe."

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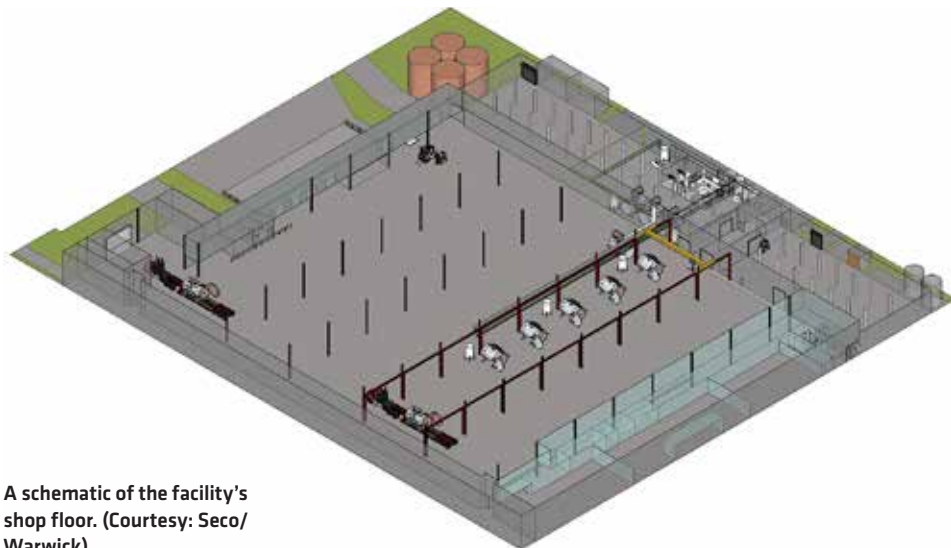
In the beginning, the plant will focus on making one product model, according to Marteeny.

"Seco/Vacuum makes six or seven different versions of vacu-

um furnaces, but its flagship – and most popular – model, Vector, which is the single chamber high pressure quench vacuum furnace line available in a number of different configurations and sizes, is the core product," he said. "That will actually be built and tested in Meadville, starting sometime in Q4 2025 after the new facility is up and running. The advantage to that gives Seco, locally, better control and more responsive service for its North American customers, but also, because some customers prefer a North American supply chain, it will meet their objectives for domestic supply as well."

Eventually, Marteeny said the plant will also include an R&D lab.

"The goal of our new R&D lab, long-term, is for trialing customer parts," he said. "Once it's up and running, they'll have an oppor-



A schematic of the facility's shop floor. (Courtesy: Seco/Warwick)

tunity to do testing and trials for efficiency, for productivity, and for performance prior to actually completing an order."

The lab will essentially allow a customer to take its product for a "test drive" on their unique parts and processes while their furnace is under construction, according to Marteeny.

"Different metallurgical compositions of alloys and configurations of parts will heat treat and quench differently, and so optimizing the performance and the recipe for a particular part for a manufacturer makes a lot of sense to do before they 'drive it off the lot,'" he said.

ADDITIONAL FEATURES

The plant will also feature an overhead crane that will cover the assembly floor space, according to Marteeny, and Seco is installing a new overhead door opening in one side of the building to accommodate raw material deliveries and to allow for loading finished

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products from the production space. The plant will include a panel shop for the manufacturing of control-system cabinets. Aftermarket services will be a part of the facility as well that will expand the companies’ spare parts and equipment rebuild capabilities.

The location is in a large plant originally built as the American Viscose Corporation. In its prime, it employed 1,500 people in Meadville, but the plant closed down in 1986.

Reclamation efforts had been in the works off and on for decades, but none of them ever managed to take off until the Economic Progress Alliance of Crawford County got involved, according to Marteeny.

“The reclamation project has been nothing short of a resounding success,” he said. “They took on renovating this space to bring more people back into it. The benefit to the county includes, one, just converting a once-abandoned facility with a large footprint into a useful manufacturing hub, and two, it’s bringing back a work base that the city was built on during the middle part of the

last century. It’s comprised now of dozens of businesses — some manufacturing firms that are doing plastic injection molding or custom precision machining, but a lot of smaller companies as well. It’s incubated quite a number of different industries, almost all of which are manufacturing based, and it’s turned out to be a really nice facility.”

THE VALUE BEHIND THE GRANT

Zawistowski emphasized the \$2 million grant from the state speaks volumes about the value Seco/Warwick brings to the table.

“We’re a company headquartered in Poland, and right now, the U.S. market makes up 25 percent of the total of the group’s current revenues; plus, the total of North America represents a very significant part of Seco/Warwick Group’s growth and opportunity,” he said. “So, expanding manufacturing here in Meadville is a really great statement, and the fact that the state is signing onto this is, I think, a tribute to the power of Seco/Warwick’s brand.”



“The total of North America represents a very significant part of Seco/Warwick Group’s growth and opportunity, so expanding manufacturing here in Meadville is a really great statement,” says president of Seco/Vacuum and Seco/Warwick USA, Piotr Zawistowski. (Courtesy: Seco/Warwick)

In support of this effort, the state said in the grant award letter that, “Governor (Josh) Shapiro is committed to making Pennsylvania an economic leader by investing in the growth of businesses like Seco/Vacuum and Seco/Warwick. In addition to the financing package outlined ... the Governor’s Action Team is prepared to provide both companies with any assistance that may be required throughout the application process, as well as to coordinate the involvement of all other state agencies in the project.”

JOB-TRAINING FUNDS

In addition to the \$2 million grant, the state is providing an additional \$69,000 in matching funds for job training through the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania’s Workforce & Economic Development Network, which will help workers slide more efficiently into their roles, according to Marteeny.

“The \$69,000 will benefit job training,” he said. “And it helps with Crawford County’s employment situation.”

The new capabilities of the facility will require an expanded staff — at both entry level and skilled positions — providing new opportunities to workers in Meadville and the surrounding communities, according to Marteeny.

“The employment part of this is actually to support skilled job

training, and it’s for full-time benefits generating wages,” he said.

The floor space that’s being converted for manufacturing will be shared by Seco/Vacuum and Seco/Warwick, according to Marteeny, which adds an extra layer of efficiency.

“Seco/Warwick USA, which makes traditional thermal atmosphere heat-treating products and aluminum melting and heat-treating products, still does a lot of their manufacturing locally, but with third-party contractors, so now, they’ll be able to bring a lot of that work back in-house and manage it with much efficient control,” he said. “It’s always better when you can actually go down to the plant floor from the office and see what’s going on inside a two-minute walk, as opposed to a 30-minute drive to a contractor’s shop.”

Seco/Vacuum manufactures heat-treating furnaces specialized for heat-treatment processes that must be conducted inside a vacuum chamber to prevent contamination from atmospheric gases. Seco/Warwick USA manufactures atmosphere heat-treatment furnaces, aluminum melting furnaces, and controlled aluminum brazing furnaces. ♪



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