

Dayton Phoenix up to 20 workers, space for more

Written by Elizabeth Barrett
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Business thrives during economic downturn.

The spacious shop area at Dayton Phoenix Group hums with activity at a time when many businesses and industries struggle to survive.

A little more than a year after the Gothenburg facility landed a contract with Union Pacific Railroad, 20 employees work the floor.

“And we’re negotiating continually to try to add business to this shop,” said manager Mike Griffith. “We’ve got the space.”

The Gothenburg facility, which is part of Dayton Phoenix Group, rebuilds radiator cooling fans, dynamic braking grid fans and blower assemblies for the railroad industry.

In September of 2010, three employees were employed when the company sealed a deal with Union Pacific after losing a contract with Burlington Northern Santa Fe Railroad shortly after the facility opened in 2009.

Griffith said they plan to add up to six more employees after the first of the year when the rewind business comes to the local plant.



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Employees at company headquarters in Dayton, OH, now rewind electric motors used in railroad equipment.

“But we’ll start that up here because we’re next to the largest railroad yard (Bailey Yard in North Platte) in the world,” he said. “It’s a lot less expensive to ship it here.”

In August, the facility also started replacing bearings on radiator cooling fans under a different railroad contract.

“We started out doing four a day which has increased to 10 a day,” Griffith said. “It keeps us hopping.”

He added that an average of five semi-tractor trailer trucks, loaded with equipment, back up to and leave the loading dock each day.

During the first six months of 2011, Griffith said 10-hour working days were not uncommon.

Of the 20 employees at the plant, all are from Gothenburg or the surrounding area.

Griffith said 10 were employees of Tenneco Automotive in Cozad, which will close its doors next year.

Equipment needing repair is shipped to Gothenburg from rail yards in North Platte; Little Rock and Roseville, AK; Sacramento, CA; Houston, TX; Kansas City and St. Louis, MO; and Chicago, IL.

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NEW MANAGER

New manager Michael Griffith started working part-time at Dayton Phoenix Group in October of 2010, while still employed part-time at Tenneco Automotive in Canad, as a re-manufacturing engineer. Tenneco will close its doors next year.

The 1976 Canad High School graduate, who still lives in Canad, started full-time work at Dayton Phoenix in January of 2011 when equipment re-manufacturing for Union Pacific started up.

"We cranked 'er up and haven't stopped running since," Griffith said. Griffith is married to Teri, who is a deaf interpreter for Lexington Public Schools. The couple has three grown children and three grandchildren.

