

# Impact Plastics, other manufacturers invest in research

By STEPHEN Di BENEDETTO October 6, 2013

HUNTLEY – Owner Scott Lemajeur and his employees at Impact Plastics earlier this month introduced a more durable product aimed to address a common complaint among customers in the waste industry.

Plastic dumpster lids that contain the poignant smell of rotting trash and keeps rodents and bugs at bay were flimsy, breaking often at the hinge, the company would hear from customers.

Impact Plastics consequently developed the Double Impact “Wedge” Lid, a long piece of plastic that has a 20 percent thicker hinge line than its predecessor.

It accomplished what the Huntley company wanted – a longer-lasting, durable product.

But the wedge lid’s release on Sept. 12 was merely the culmination of a two-year process involving trial and error, innovation, a new facility, and a specialty oven that Lemajeur has said couldn’t be achieved without a committed investment to research and development.

“We won’t slow down on R&D,” Lemajeur said. “I totally understand why people would, but we are a different type of company. We are trying to be innovators.”

Impact Plastics primarily needed the technology to make the thicker lid. The industrial ovens available on the market wouldn’t heat the plastic properly, since the new lid would be thinner on one end and much thicker near the hinge, Lemajeur said.

The inadequate heating would often warp the plastic.

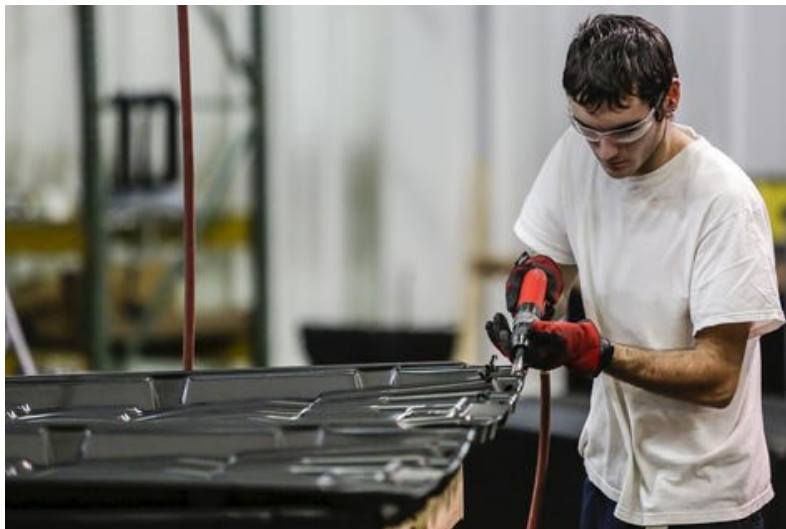
Impact Plastics in turn developed plans and partnered with a Carol Stream company to design and test a specialty oven capable of heating the plastic at different temperatures.



Impact Plastics would eventually make a \$1 million investment in the ovens, added 20 employees to produce the new product in-house and relocated its operation from Elgin to a bigger facility in Huntley.

“We innovate it and make it better,” Lemajeur said. “That’s what we do on every single product we touch.”

Since 1999, Impact Plastics has prided itself on developing, improving and researching ways to make its lids, casters and wheels better and more environmentally-friendly for its customers in the waste industry.



Impact Plastics’ commitment to research and development comes as more companies throughout the Chicago region diminish their investment to R&D.

The seven-county Chicago region lost nearly half of its private research and development jobs in the last decade, as investment declined, the Chicago Metropolitan Agency for Planning reported earlier this year.

The region consistently ranked as the country’s second-largest research hub, next to New York, from 1970 to 2000, as the region’s R&D spending tripled. But throughout the last decade the region’s R&D output dropped by nearly \$2 billion to a total of \$4.1 billion, CMAP found.

The findings did not surprise Lemajeur, who said that companies shedding costs typically first look at research.

“The easiest thing to cut is R&D. You could make a ‘me, too’ product or compete on price,” he said. “For me, that is not the future. There is always someone who can go cheaper. For me, the future is value.”

Pam Cumpata, president of the McHenry County Economic Development Corporation, sees a similar dedication to innovation with area companies like Sage Products, Covidien and Duraflex.

As the economy recovers, companies in the area are starting to feel more confident about research and development, Cumpata said.

“Research and development is not important, it’s critical,” she said. “It’s all about how we improve a product, improve a process, and make things better. If we are not innovating, then business stops.”

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### **Impact Plastics**

What: Founded in 1999, Impact Plastics manufactures quality, environmentally-friendly products for the waste industry, including dumpster lids, casters, recycled wheels and roll-off parts.

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