

Cary getting paper maker's HQ

Loparex to move from Chicago and employ 60. It will also expand its Rockingham plant.

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A global manufacturer of specialty paper and films will move its U.S. headquarters to Wake County and expand a plant in Rockingham County, adding 128 jobs in the state during the next 3 1/2 years.

Loparex, which is based in the Netherlands, plans to move its U.S. offices from a Chicago suburb to Cary, where it will employ 60 and pay an average annual wage of \$93,347, according to a statement from Gov. Beverly Perdue.

It will also expand a factory in Eden, which is north of Greensboro on the Virginia border, where it employs 92. Loparex plans to add 68 positions there with an average annual wage of \$52,323.

State officials offered Loparex a grant worth as much as \$2.35 million over nine years to win the expansion over sites in Iowa and Wisconsin, where Loparex also has plants. Leaders in Rockingham and Wake Counties are considering additional incentives.

Mike Apperson, chief executive of Loparex, said the company decided to move because it no longer had a plant near Chicago and he wanted headquarters staff to be near a factory.

"The business environment, the availability of talent, the ability to attract talent" and the assistance of state leaders put North Carolina "over the top" as Loparex executives considered options, Apperson said.

The presence of N.C. State University in Raleigh and N.C. A&T State University in Greensboro also were factors, said Ernie Pearson, who works for Nexsen Pruet law firm and helped Loparex with its site selection. The schools have engineering and other expertise beneficial to the company.

You're familiar with Loparex if you've ever worn a nametag. It makes the paper you pull off before applying the tag.

But the applications for its products are far more complex. Its films also have healthcare uses, for instance, keeping medical patches sticky and the medicine on them before they are applied.

Loparex, which is owned by ABN-AMRO Capital, has picked up some market share amid the global downturn, Apperson said, but overall business is down. The timing of the headquarters shift and expansion in Eden comes from a business principle "that says when things are slow you can make some changes so you're better positioned when things come back," he said.

To get the full value of the state grant, Loparex must meet annual benchmarks on job creation and retention, wages and investment.

The company plans to take 17,000 to 20,000 square feet of space in the Crescent Lakeside II office complex in Cary and aims to move in sometime this fall. Proximity to the airport was important in choosing a location -- Loparex started with a list of 70 potential properties in the Triangle -- because the company expects to have customers flying in from around the world.

"This project demonstrates clearly," Perdue said, "the unique qualities that make North Carolina a top choice for global companies looking to invest and expand."

CEO: Mike Apperson

Employees: About 1,500 worldwide

History: Loparex, headquartered in the Netherlands, traces its roots back more than 100 years, growing from a small pulp manufacturer into a global manufacturer of specialty papers and films. Since September 2005, it has been owned by ABN-AMRO Capital.

Products: In simplest terms, Loparex makes the film on the back of nametags and other stickers that protect the stickiness until they are applied. Its portfolio, though, encompasses many uses with applications in health care, aviation and other industries.

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