

Progressive offers tool transfer service

Division takes advantage of up-for-grabs tool work

By Rhoda Miel
PLASTICS NEWS STAFF

CHICAGO — Turmoil in the plastics industry is creating a need for a new service as molders and original equipment suppliers find themselves transferring hundreds of molds at any time from one company to another, and sometimes with very little information about how that tool was used.

With its new Tool Transfer service under its ToolingDocs business division, Progressive Components International Corp. is looking for ways to make those transfers as smooth as possible by providing neutral documentation and repairs.

Just in the auto industry, for example, carmakers have moved part production from one supplier to another, sometimes with little notice. Sometimes those tools then show up on a new press in another city without any information, and the new molder is essentially running blind as it starts up production. A company that has just lost business — or been forced into bankruptcy — often does not have the time or the inclination to carefully package a tool for its new location.

The ToolingDocs' Tool Transfer business takes advantage of its recently opened mold maintenance center in Ashland, Ohio, as well as the company's status as a neutral third party to survey the mold, do needed maintenance and even write maintenance manuals and input data to a maintenance software package.

"There are an unprecedented number of

tools being moved around due to plant closures and capacity shifts," said Randy Winton, global assessment and training manager for ToolingDocs.

That means work is up for grabs at a time when molders are looking for additional revenue and a way to boost capacity. But, if they're not prepared for the work involved in taking on transfer business, they may end up losing more money than they would make.

"Too often we hear stories about a mold arriving at its destination with parts damaged or missing and no one knows why," Winton said. "It takes time and money to then restore the mold to production readiness."

ToolingDocs can manage the tool shipping process as an independent company, do full maintenance, cleaning and repair, and perform mold analysis before the tool is shipped to its new location to resume production.

Since ToolingDocs is a neutral party, he said, no one is looking to assign blame for the mold's condition. Instead, the focus is on proper documentation and then getting the mold ready for operation again.

The Ohio facility will be overseeing more than just transfer business. The site has dedicated mold maintenance operations with mold cleaning and repair for molds, and a training center.

"This is about finding the need for businesses that haven't even been created yet," said Progressive President Glenn Starkey.

Another Progressive unit, Roehr Tool



Steve Johnson, at the newly opened ToolingDocs maintenance center, serving as an independent resource for tooling transfers.

Progressive Components International Corp. photo

Corp., also has a new facility. Roehr, purchased by Wauconda, Ill.-based Progressive in 2006, moved into a larger plant in Hudson, Mass., to improve workflow, said Jim Cullison, Roehr vice president. The company specializes in collapsible core technology for threaded parts.

Progressive Components exhibited at NPE2009, held June 22-26 in Chicago.