

ForwardFocus

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Summer 2014

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Coming Oct. 9-10!**

Montana Manufacturing Center

University Technical Assistance Program

Simms Wades Deep Into Energy Efficiencies Inside & Out

By Deborah Nash, MMEC

July 2014 marks the second year SIMMS Fishing Products has been conducting business from its striking new headquarters west of Bozeman. With continuing strong growth it has already experienced a second expansion since the move.

"It's been an amazing year and a half; it feels like we are still settling in." Donna Crask, Senior Production Supervisor, said in a spring interview.

The solar panels atop the building are the capstone in an array of energy management solutions in play at the facility, which also houses production and warehouse operations. All were consolidated from five buildings at its former north Bozeman location.

"The solar electric system is the fifth largest in the state," Robert Gibson, Simms Senior Director of Operations, said. It provides up to 20 percent of the facility's electricity today.

Add solar water heating, occupancy-sensor lighting, extra insulation, E+ glass and skylights, plus right-sized external shipping and receiving doors to reduce energy loss, and the 62,000 sq. ft. building is a showcase for energy efficiency, the SIMMS brand, and a model workplace.

Energy efficiency initiatives extend far beyond the building envelope and began even before the move.

"As the leading manufacturer of waders and related apparel for the fishing industry, we've been trying to conserve energy and do the right thing for the environment, which is such a big part of our business," Gibson said.

Energy Network Leads to Cohort Membership

The Montana Manufacturing Extension Center (MMEC) worked with Simms to develop an energy intensity profile for both the old and new buildings during plans for the move. It helped investigate upgrades to lighting and other beneficial energy conservation measures for the new building.

During that time, MMEC Field Engineer Mark Shyne introduced Simms to an energy initiative through NEEA (National Energy Efficiency Alliance) and the national Manufacturing Extension Partnership (MEP) of which MMEC is an affiliate. The collaboration was designed to introduce low cost energy saving strategies to small firms that, because of their size, must keep resources focused on production.



Robert Gibson (l.) and Mark Shyne (r.) stand near SIMMS solar electric array, the fifth largest in the state.



Shipping access considered to maximize energy efficiency

"MMEC helped us analyze how we were using energy, made recommendations to improve our compressor system, and made us aware of energy-saving opportunities through a Cohort," says Gibson.

NEEA provided free technical support for energy efficiencies through the MEP in an 18-month nationwide program in 2011 and 2012. Along with the local utility provider, in this case NorthWestern Energy, it offered education and training through a Western Montana Strategic Energy Management Cohort, made up of several companies interested in energy management strategies. Both Gibson, Crask, and Sharon Quiroz were members along with people from West Paw Design, Helena Municipal Water and several Montana mining companies.

The value of the engineering services through NEEA and the MEP was

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HOME OFFICE

2310 University Way, Bldg. 2
P.O. Box 174255
Montana State University
Bozeman, MT 59717
(800) MEP-4MFG
(406) 994-3812
Fax: (406) 994-3391
mmec@coe.montana.edu

FIELD OFFICES**Billings**

[vacant]

Bozeman

Mark Shyne
UTAP-MSU
(406) 994-3813
marks@coe.montana.edu

Todd Daniels
MMEC, still serving
Central MT Region
(406) 994-6055
tdaniels@coe.montana.edu

Helena

[vacant]

Kalispell

Bill Nicholson
Flathead Valley Community College
(406) 249-9404
bnicholson@coe.montana.edu

Missoula

Jeremy Wolf
School of Business Administration
University of Montana
(406) 243-6613
jeremy.wolf@coe.montana.edu

Change is in the air

The Montana Manufacturing Extension Center (MMEC) is undergoing major changes. John F. Kennedy once said, "Change is the law of life. And those who look only to the past or present are certain to miss the future."



Paddy Fleming

On June 20th, Margie Jensen, MMEC's administrative assistant since 1997, retired after 25 years at MSU and 18 years at MMEC.

On June 30th, Steve

Holland, MMEC's director since the fall of 2000, retired after 14 years at MMEC and MSU. On September 5th, Mark Shyne, Helena Field Engineer from 1996-1997 and Bozeman Field Engineer from 1999 to 2014, will retire after 16 years at MMEC and MSU. The contributions these three individuals made to MMEC, MSU, and the manufacturing community of Montana are far too great to list here, and all will greatly miss them.

With these retirements, rising costs, and declining revenues forcing major changes at MMEC, Dr. Brett Gunnink, Dean of Engineering at MSU, has appointed me as Interim Director of MMEC. A nationwide search for a new director will occur in the future at the discretion of Dr. Gunnink.

For those of you who don't know me, I served as the Kalispell Field Engineer from 2001-2003, a MilTech Field Engineer from 2006-2013, and the Kalispell Field Engineer from 2013-2014.

With my appointment as Interim Director, yet another change is in the air. The Kalispell Field Engineer position needed to be filled. Fortunately, Bill Nicholson, Kalispell Field Engineer from 2004-2013, has agreed to return to his former position. This is great news for Northwest Montana's manufacturers who know and trust Bill's amazing work.

With Mark's approaching retirement, Todd Daniels, Helena Field Engineer from 2000-2014, recently turned down an offer to be the Director of the

Louisiana MEP (MMEC equivalent) and has agreed to become the Bozeman Field Engineer. This, too, is great news for MMEC and the manufacturers of Southwest Montana who are used to the high quality work Mark provides. While manufacturers of Central Montana will greatly miss Todd as their main contact, he remains part of the team and will assist with a smooth transition for the area.

Along with replacing the Central Montana position, we are also trying to figure out how to fill the Billings Field Engineer position which has been vacant since 2013 due to financial constraints.

We are also taking this opportunity to restructure our front office. To assist in the transition, the Western Transportation Institute (WTI), an MSU College of Engineering program, has graciously provided MMEC with 50% of Jenni West's time. Jenni, a talented program manager at WTI, is currently MMEC's Interim Business Manager where she is trying to document and temporarily cover the administrative duties.

The only two MMEC employees that are not currently experiencing major job changes at this moment are Deborah Nash, our Technical Writer/Outreach Coordinator, and Jeremy Wolf, our Missoula Field Engineer. The rest of us at MMEC are quite jealous of Deborah and Jeremy at this point.

With all this change going on, one would think that MMEC would want to simply get through the personnel changes quickly and with the least disruption. Contrary to what most people think, this is the best time to implement long-term structural change. Therefore, MMEC has taken this opportunity to fully engage our advisory board and draw from their vast knowledge. This recently led to a successful meeting with MSU President Waded Cruzado and will hopefully lead to many more valuable recommendations from our board.

MMEC will also look to more closely align its strategic goals with those of our strategic partners across the state.

(continued on page 6)

SNEAK PREVIEW of Compete Smart Oct. 9 & 10, 2014, Billings, MT



Come Celebrate the Magic at 2014 COMPETE SMART Conference

Never Believe It's Not So with Everybody's Favorite:

Real Stories from your Manufacturing Neighbors

Manufacturing enriches our lives every day. Come celebrate the MAGIC at the 2014 Compete Smart Manufacturing Conference on October 9 & 10 in Billings, Montana. Hear compelling speakers and see possibilities during local plant tours. Saw effort in half as you gain direct access to business experts, seasoned entrepreneurs, peers and allies. Boost your company's growth with choices from 25 breakout sessions covering winning strategies, technology, marketing, Lean manufacturing, finance, and performance excellence.

If you have never attended the Compete Smart Manufacturing Conference, co-hosted by Montana Manufacturing Extension Center (MMEC) and North-Western Energy, put it on your calendar today – and bring your key people!

Keynote: Are You On The Same Page?

Compete Smart keynote speaker JOE CALHOON will help you unlock the chains of spending too much time on what is urgent and not enough growing your business. Using proven principles from 25 years of developing leaders and strategic clarity for over 600 clients, he will reveal why growth is not complicated. Joe will inform and entertain as he offer keys to extraordinary results. Joe's message has been delivered on four continents. He is president of consulting company,

PriorityAdvantage™.

By special request, Joe will stay on at the conference to deliver a breakout session on Oct. 10 to introduce the concepts of the highly effective "1 Hour To Plan for Business Growth." This proprietary tool is also licensed to MMEC.

What's in the Magic Hat at Compete Smart

A multi-faceted conference, Compete Smart also offers an eye-opening 100-foot Montana Product Showcase that has a diverse sampling of products made in our great state. An expansive Exhibit Hall will create new and lasting relationships with allies who support your business in a variety of ways.

This year's Evening Social in the Exhibitor Hall will have plenty of food and a cash bar, plus a special Dessert Talk peeking into the magic of opportunity and innovation in the Bakken with engaging speakers, Brian Ce-bull and Jim Haider from GTUIT, a Montana company applying innovative solutions to create opportunity, efficiency and cost savings for its customers. They will reveal what's happening in the oil patch and the environmental bonus associated with creating a new value stream in the Bakken. Governor Steve Bullock has been invited to share in festivities, and the evening event is supported by "Choose Montana" and the Governor's Office of Economic Development.

★ **Bryan Wood, President**

Wood's Powr-Grip, Laurel



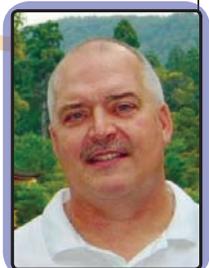
★ **Lacey Ehlike, ISO Manager**

FELCO Industries, Missoula, and Montana Hydraulics, Helena



★ **Claude Smith, Plant Manager**

Pasta Montana LLC



Simms (cont. from cover)



Showcase for energy efficiency, the SIMMS brand, and a model workplace.

considerable Experts came on site to collaborate with the building contractor, Simms staff, and the MMEC engineer.

Careful consideration of many alternative energies was involved, Shyne said, and several incentives and rebates were obtained for important new building upgrades.

NorthWestern Energy helped Simms with its efforts to become solar powered through industrial incentive programs. Two U.S. Department of Agriculture Rural Development Program grants also helped. Rebates and the grants covered a significant portion of its \$200K investment.

It can take up to 30 years for a business to recoup the investment it takes to put energy saving devices in place that lower demand on the grid. “That is a very long time in a business life cycle,” Gibson said. “The incentives and grants make sense.” (Learn more about NorthWestern Energy industrial energy incentives program at www.NorthWesternEnergy.com/Eplus or call 800-823-5995. Also, learn more about the USDA Rural Development energy programs at <http://www.rurdev.usda.gov/Energy.html>)

“While the incentives and grants are extremely important to Simms Fishing Products, so is our commitment to decreasing our overall energy footprint,” said Sharon Quiroz, Warehouse Supervisor, who also serves on the Energy Management Team at Simms.

Lean Focus and Energy Cuts a Natural

“We are very lean here,” Gibson said, “which supports energy management that identifies opportunities to reduce waste, cut energy costs, and greatly improve process efficiency.” MMEC introduced Lean Manufacturing to Simms 14 years ago and has long been one of its trusted business advisors.

The company has made a significant investment in energy efficiency and is exceeding its two-year goals of 12 and 13% energy reduction, Gibson said, even with air conditioning throughout the building which it did not have before. The Cohort taught them to how to monitor and measure usage and base consumption on items shipped in order to normalize the savings and get a true picture. “Otherwise efficiencies in the new building might skew the comparison.”

The latest efficiency acquisition at Simms is a huge hydraulic compressed air tank. “A new compressor was in the budget, thinking one would be needed in order to add on several processes,” Quiroz said. “NorthWestern Energy came in, assessed our current situation, and said we just needed a bigger tank to reduce the cycling and extend the life of the compressor that seemed to be running all the time.”

Energy Team Casts Appeal at ICE OUT Event

Both Crask and Quiroz had high praise for the cohort and are excited about how awareness is making a difference at the plant and has hooked into personal lives. It even caught the attention of fishing guides at last summer’s Simms Professional Fishing Guide ICE OUT event. The annual event brings fishing guides from across North America to Bozeman to learn more about Simms, discover ways to be better guides, network with colleagues and celebrate their common passion.

“At the Guide Event we explained the environmental initiatives we were doing at Simms and encouraged them to extend it to their guide work. Simms started a “Willows for Waders” program to encourage recycling of old waders through rebates and at the same time help rebuild stream banks. The response went way beyond what they anticipated and had budgeted.

Before and Now

“Before the cohort, energy savings was just not part of our thinking,” Crask said.

In addition to tips on how to set up a team and how to track changes against past use, the cohort also offered training on low cost ways to incorporate energy efficiencies and made members aware of energy incentive programs. NEEA and its utility partners across the Northwest are currently exploring ways to continue such cohorts in a sustainable way, increasing access to online training and staff, according to Deb Young from NorthWestern Energy.

“The Cohort helped Simms develop an Energy Plan that explained the goal and what we are trying to achieve,” Crask said. The plan was presented to Senior Management for buy-in, and they signed off. The plan called for continually striving to increase energy efficiency, and “we are definitely on track; even surpassing our goals.”

Many small things are making a difference. LED exit signs, a new equipment evaluation to help balance peak

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Simms (cont. from pg. 4)

usage. Computers are now turned off over the weekend – all these things are done without inconvenience to the employee, both Crask and Quiroz agree.

Newsletter To Keep Employees Informed

“We’re all about a positive workplace.” To help educate employees on the energy efforts, an internal e-newsletter was used to build awareness and buy-in. It contained information on what was happening with the cohort, area recycling events, and tips for energy savings at home. It explained the implementation for the new building and educated

people on energy sucking vampire gadgets at work stations, like cell phone chargers. The new building introduced water bottle fillers that encourage people to bring their own bottles, so there’s less to recycle, Quiroz said.



Donna Crask (l.) and Sharon Quiroz (r.)

After the newsletter came out, Crask noticed people shutting off lights and opening blinds to let in more natural light. “We took it upon ourselves to make simple changes; no policing needed. And I know it impacted me at home,” she said.

A sewing employee recently reported that an energy saver setting on a new machine had been discovered and switched on, without affecting performance. Her enthusiasm and interest in seeing if some of the other machines have that switch demonstrates how energy awareness is growing.

More Energy Saving Efforts

As part of its cost savings and Lean culture, Simms takes great care to minimize the amount of scrap material generated during wader production.

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MMEC Energy Intensity Profile Helps Launch SIMMS Energy Management System



Haider, former MMEC Energy Specialist, now co-owner of GTUIT in Billings

As part of the energy intensity profile, MMEC metered the air compressor at the north Bozeman location prior to SIMMS Fishing Products move to Four Corners west of Bozeman. Data was collected over 11 days to evaluate usage over a period of time to catch all operational variations. Through Department of Energy-commissioned compressor air analysis software and other tools, MMEC Energy Specialist Jim Haider analyzed data and inputs from utility payments made by Simms. He then estimated cost savings to determine the conservation efforts that would make the most sense and recommended the order in which they should be addressed to maximize outcomes.

The heartbeat of production at Simms is its compressed air system. Immediate savings and productivity can often be garnered by reviewing system capacity and addressing leaks. It was one area Shyne highlighted for review by Haider (now a co-owner of GTUIT in Billings).

Leak Maintenance Offers Immediate Savings

The system leak rate was a particular focus in the analysis, because typical leak rates in a compressed air system range from 10% to 50% and higher. At the old Simms plant the rate was determined to be 27%.

“A range of 10% or less is desirable and typical for companies aggressively pursuing leakage reduction,” Haider said. To realize immediate savings with little or no capital investment, he recommended addressing leaks in the last 30 or so feet of a system air line, where flexible hose, quick connect fittings, filters, regulators, and end use devices are more apt to leak.

Because much of the equipment in that section was likely to be relocated to the new facility, the savings would carry over as well.

A recommended ongoing leak management system is now in place, using suggested techniques like scheduled leak detection walk-throughs, a system of tagging and cataloging identified leaks, and a method for repairing problems and documenting fixes. Simms production staff have incorporated many improvements in how compressed air is used by production equipment – especially when the equipment is idle.

“Production staff stopped using the system as ‘air brooms’ to clean up work areas,” once they realized it put unnecessary load on the compressor, said Sharon Quiroz, who serves on the Simms Energy Management Team. Feedback on energy and productivity improvements is encouraged from operators and production staff who are most familiar with the equipment and the best resource for identifying realistic modifications.

Since a move had been imminent at the time of the energy analysis, no changes to an aging air delivery header were recommended, but the compressed air system in today’s facility has a robust air delivery header appropriate for the current and anticipated air requirements recommended in the report.



Shyne at larger compressed air tank, the latest efficiency solution.

Manufacturing News

Montana Hydraulics and FELCO, Earn ISO 9001:2008 Certification

SRI Quality System Registrar is pleased to announce that it recently awarded an ISO 9001:2008 Management System certificate to **Montana Hydraulics LLC**, www.montanahydraulics.com located in Helena, Montana, for the design, manufacture, and machining of products and components for mining, railroad, timber processing and other heavy industrial machinery and **FELCO, LLC**, www.felco-ind.com located in Missoula, Montana for the design, manufacture and supply of construction equipment and large sized custom fabrication. ISO 9000 certification provides evidence to customers, suppliers, employees, and their community of their commitment to producing a quality product (service) and providing customer satisfaction.

Bear Spray Manufacturer Making an Impact

Interesting article in the Flathead Beacon about bear spray developer, **Counter Assault** in Kalispell. Appreciation to MATR Newsletter for the lead to this article about another great Montana Manufacturer. <http://flatheadbeacon.com/2014/07/03/counter-assault-making-name-best-defense-bear-country/>

Organic Liquid Soap Now Available

Botanie Soap in Missoula recently introduced a new organic, foaming liquid soap that is available for sale on its website <http://botaniesoap.com/>

ViZn Wins Electrical Energy Storage Award

ViZn Energy Systems, Inc. viznenergy.com, a pioneer in large-scale energy storage technology, recently announced that it had been selected as a winner of the 2014 Intersolar Europe Electrical Energy Storage (ees) Award in Munich for their Z20 energy storage system. The ees Award honors outstanding products and solutions in the fields of materials, production, systems technology, applications, second-use concepts and recycling. Judges select the recipients based on the degree of technological innovation, economic viability and benefit the solutions bring to the industry and environment.

Thompson Precision Recommended

On July 11, Todd Daniels from MMEC announced that **Thompson Precision** www.thompsonprecision.com, a world class machining and fabrication job shop manufacturer in Kalispell, has been recommended for AS 9100 certification after completing the audit of its quality management system.

Lightfoot Cycles Gearing Up for More Production

Lightfoot Cycles <http://www.lightfootcycles.com/> is gearing up for production of pedicabs - three-wheeled, human-powered taxis - after landing a contract with Coaster Pedicabs, a San Francisco-based company that operates pedicab services in nine U.S. cities. Lightfoot Cycles is ramping up hiring in its production department for a second phase of the contract to help growing demand for the pedicab, with a safer, more comfortable design. The local Job Service in Hamilton is taking applications. Source: RavalliRepublic.com

Missoula Economic Partnership Helps Attract Steel Fabricator

Missoula County's manufacturing sector continues its resurgence with the announcement that **Harris Manufacturing**, a contract fabricator of custom steel industrial equipment, has chosen Bonner as the site for a new, 38,500-square-foot operation. The company will hire 25-30 welders and other skilled and unskilled workers - and bring upward of \$4 million to \$4.5 million in capital investment to the area. According to James Grunke, CEO of the Partnership, the new operation will create positive ripple effects across the local economy. Harris ultimately chose Missoula because of its high-quality workforce, proximity to market, and workforce training programs at UM-Missoula College. The company broke ground on its new facility and plans to open for manufacturing in autumn 2014. The Partnership helped connect them with government and business leaders, services and programs needed to evaluate the community for the right fit. www.MissoulaPartnership.com



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or issues that concern you and for your company news briefs.

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Simms (cont. from pg. 5)

Even with that care, production scrap fills a six gallon container three times weekly. Discussions are now underway with a South Carolina firm interested in burning it as an energy source.

Simms has switched from propane to electric forklifts and does not charge them during peak load, only in off hours. Hydraulic fluid from its clickers (that cut fabric shapes) is recycled twice a year to a collector that burns it as an energy source in his salvage yard. Cardboard is now baled for pickup/recycling rather than paying to have it hauled away.

Re-energizing Focus on Next Wave of Efficiencies

"We are growing so fast, the energy team hasn't been very active," Quiroz said, "due to getting resettled and meeting the demands of continuing growth. We want to re-energize the team for fresh ideas and expand our cross-functionality. We plan to add focus on recycling, let people know where we're at as a company, and what's next!"

Change (cont. from pg. 2)

The changes at MMEC are actually classified as a "long-term structural transformation" because they meet the following four criteria:

1. affect all or most of the organization,
2. involve significant alternations to the status quo,
3. last for months if not years, and
4. are of major strategic importance.

We will try to keep everyone informed of the latest changes. We are committed to serving our valued customers and strategic partners to the absolute best of our abilities during and after these changing times. Please feel free to suggest changes that you would like to see at MMEC to your local Field Engineer or call me at any time at 406-249-9178.

Respectfully,



Paddy Fleming, MMEC Interim Director

Main Street Montana Project Regional Meetings Set

Plan to attend the Main Street Montana Project <http://www.mainstreetmontanaproject.com/> Regional Meetings to share the unique successes and challenges in your region and help build a business plan for Montana by Montanans.

The Main Street Montana Project recognizes that each region of Montana has unique assets, strategies, challenges and characteristics. The goal of the Regional Meetings is to facilitate a work session that focuses on the Five Pillars, Goals and Objectives of the Main Street Montana Project Business Plan; view details at the project website. Through this process, regional priorities will be identified, action plans will be formulated, and work teams will be formed.

Register to receive a name tag, which is your lunch ticket! The registration link is on the Main Street Montana Project website (*navigation button to start registration at bottom of registration page*).

Regional Meetings continue. The following meetings take place from 10 am - 2 pm (meeting site identified for each location in the registration process):

Western Region: Polson, Wed., July 23

Southwest Region: Fairmont, Mon., August 11

North Central Region: Great Falls, Tues., August 19

Regional Meetings are sponsored by the Montana Ambassadors <http://montanaambassadors.com/> and Montana Economic Developers Association (MEDA) <http://www.medamembers.org/>.

Contact: Gloria O'Rourke Phone: 406-563-5259 Email: gloria@montanaeds.com

MAIN STREET MONTANA PROJECT
A BUSINESS PLAN *For Montana by Montanans*

Free Mid-Summer Innovation Roundtables Being Offered

Calling all Inventors and Researchers – Do you have an Innovative Product or Concept?

Would you like to connect with the Commercial Market? Learn about protecting your idea and moving it forward during these Free Innovation Events hosted by Montana Technology Innovation Partnership (MTIP) and local Economic Development service providers in your community in the following locations/dates:

Billings – Monday, July 28

Miles City – Tuesday, July 29

Wolf Point – Wednesday, July 30

Havre – Thursday, July 31

Lewistown – Friday, August 1

Contact: Audrey Wooding, MTIP, phone 406-994-3885, or visit the MTIP website for details:

<http://mtip.mt.gov/events.mcp>

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- Jenni West**
Interim Business Manager
- Deborah Nash**
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UTAP Staff

- William Hamel**, Industrial Engineer
- Amanda Jorgenson**, Industrial Engineer

MMEC Mission

Providing systems and solutions to help Montana manufacturers innovate, plan, perform and grow.

To Visit Your Area MMEC Field Engineer
Call 406-994-3812

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<https://www.etchouches.com/78826>

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Montana Manufacturing Conference

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