SSL Postings

Although you do not often hear about growth in domestic manufacturing here in the United States, the solid-state lighting industry is steadily growing and establishing a manufacturing presence here at home. Solid-state lighting was not only born of U.S. ingenuity and R&D, but is riding the crest of a worldwide trend toward greater energy efficiency. This offers a golden opportunity for U.S. manufacturing to take a significant role in SSL. From time to time, these Postings *will focus on SSL companies manufacturing here in the U.S., a series we call "SSL in America." This is not intended to endorse or promote any of the companies, but rather to describe advances in energy-efficient solid-state lighting. The activities you'll read about here are consistent with the U.S. Department of Energy (DOE) white paper "Keeping Manufacturing in the United States," which grew out of DOE's 2010 SSL Manufacturing R&D Workshop.*

Juno Lighting Group is a manufacturer of lighting fixtures. It makes track lighting, undercabinet lighting, outdoor lighting, high-bay lighting, emergency lighting, and recessed downlights, using most light-source technologies. The company was founded in 1976 and is now part of Schneider Electric, a global specialist in energy management. Juno commercialized its first LED product in 2008, and today offers LED products for most of the lighting applications it addresses. The company has won a number of Next Generation Luminaires™ design competition awards, and solid-state lighting revenues are expected to exceed 20 percent of its business this year.

According to senior vice president of engineering and product management Chris Walsh, the vast majority of Juno's SSL manufacturing is done here in the U.S. and involves hundreds of employees, with the rest of its SSL manufacturing done in Asia. The company has two separate domestic manufacturing facilities: one in Des Plaines, IL, located just outside of Chicago; and the other in Fishers, IN, just outside of Indianapolis.

A major reason why Juno does so much of its SSL manufacturing in the U.S., according to Chris, has to do with where its customers are. He explains that most of those customers are in the U.S. or Canada, and that the close proximity allows Juno to be flexible and to respond to their needs faster by shortening lead time. Chris notes that demand volatility makes it hard to predict how many of each product type will be ordered in a given month, so Juno often finds itself having to produce large quantities in a short space of time. If the products were manufactured overseas instead of here in the U.S., customers would have to wait much longer to receive them because of the longer supply chain. This also gives Juno the flexibility to configure products according to the needs of individual customers, and to enable it to keep a tight control on quality.

Another advantage of manufacturing domestically, Chris points out, is that it's easier to find the needed skill sets here. He explains that it's not just a question of finding good engineers and R&D folks, but also of finding those who are familiar with North American performance specifications and safety codes for SSL, such as UL and ENERGY STAR®. Related to that, Chris adds, is the fact that having a strong U.S. manufacturing presence enables Juno to have personal relationships with those who are working to develop those codes and specifications, which gives his company – and, by extension, the customers whose needs it serves – a voice in their creation. The way Chris puts it is that Juno knows what its customers want and don't want, so the company's input is important in the specification and safety-code development process, with Juno serving as a sort of bridge between how a product is actually being

used, and the rules and guidelines that are created to shape how it performs.

Chris says the company's solid-state lighting business is expanding, and it's continuing to invest in upgrading its U.S.-based lab facilities and manufacturing processes.

Juno Lighting Group is among a number of companies that are working to create and strengthen a solid-state lighting manufacturing base here in the U.S. This will not only help bring significant energy savings through more efficient lighting products, but will benefit our economy by adding jobs at multiple levels of the supply chain.

As always, if you have questions or comments, you can reach us at postings@lightingfacts.com.