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Business Around the Region

Chattanooga lands HQ of chemical company, MFG Chemical

MFG Chemical moving to downtown's Liberty Tower

October 24th, 2020 | by [Mike Pare](#)



Contributed photo by MFG Chemical / Christopher Daniel performs tests on an item at MFG Chemical.

Chattanooga has won a regional competition to house the headquarters of a specialty chemical manufacturer, beating out Atlanta and the company's longtime home office location.

MFG Chemical, started and headquartered in Dalton, Georgia, for four decades, is shifting its executive team to Liberty Tower in downtown Chattanooga, said company CEO Paul Turgeon.

Plans are to initially take up about two-thirds of the 15th floor in Liberty Tower, which is the third tallest building in Chattanooga. Republic Centre, next door on Chestnut Street, is the tallest while the Truist (SunTrust) Bank Building is second on Market.

Charles Wood, the Chattanooga Area Chamber of Commerce's vice president for economic development, said leaders in the greater Chattanooga area find that it competes with the Atlanta metro region more often these days.

"As a midsized city with a labor pool of more than 1 million people in the surrounding 15 counties, we continue to grow our reputation for offering easy access to the great outdoors and for a quality of life that, for many people, surpasses that of a large metro," said Wood.

Turgeon said MFG's administrative employees currently are housed in one of its Dalton plants, but the company needs more capacity. Officials did a search from Chattanooga to Atlanta and points between and picked the Scenic City "as the best place for us to be."

MFG started in 1980 making chemicals for the textile industry, but it later expanded its market focus. While the business grew, the family decided to sell the company, which is now owned by the private equity firm Platte River Equity in Denver.

Turgeon, 60, who was born in Canada but also has U.S. citizenship, said he joined MFG's board three years ago amid a long career in the chemical industry. He was elevated to CEO in January.

But in March, the coronavirus pandemic hit and created a lot of market turbulence. That prompted the company to take down its facilities for maintenance for a period and some employees were furloughed, the CEO said.

"It was an unprecedented, once-in-a-lifetime event," he said. "It has been difficult waters to navigate."

The company put into place health and safety measures for employees, and it even moved to produce hand sanitizer, which it marketed "pretty successfully," Turgeon said.

Now, he said, all of MFG's facilities are running again, though not at full tilt.

Revenues likely will fall about 12% in 2020 over last year, Turgeon said, with all of that due to the six- to eight-week period in the spring.

Looking ahead to 2021, he said he's "guardedly optimistic and positive." He's hopeful all 50 states will have reopened their economies next year.

"The company is well positioned in its markets," he said, adding that MFG is continuing to invest in the business, its employees and plants. "We need more capacity and people."

Turgeon said a company priority is sustainability, and it's making multimillion-dollar upgrades to environmental controls at its plants to improve quality.

One trend is that companies which had moved off shore are shifting operations back to the U.S., Turgeon said.

"There's an opportunity to grow with that trend," he said. "We have very robust growth prospects."

Wood said that prospective companies looking at the Chattanooga region frequently say that community assets and higher overall quality of life are key deciding factors.

"Through our Chattanooga Climbs 5-year economic development and talent attraction plan, we are very focused on retaining and growing high-wage, high-skill jobs," he said.

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